

VOL. 92

JANUARY

# Prabuddha Bharata

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**JANUARY 1987**

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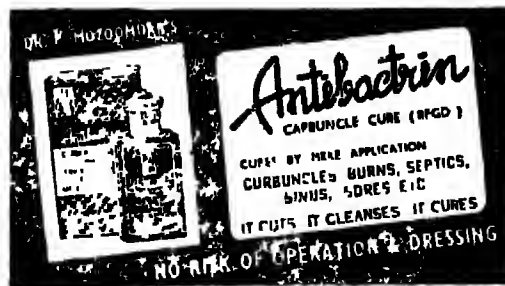
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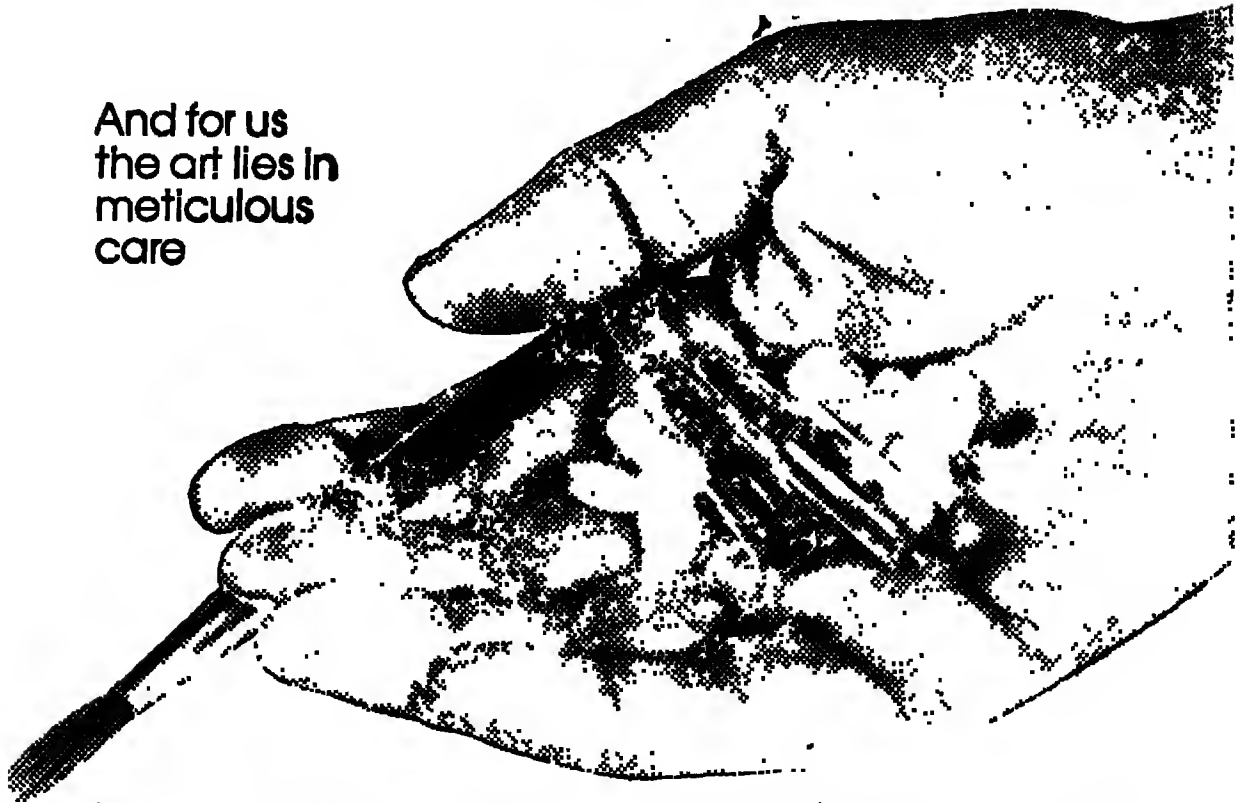
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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 92

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No. 1

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

## ETERNAL VOICE OF INDIA

*Vidyayā vindate amṛtam*

'Immortality is attained through Self-knowledge'

Hear ye, children of Immortality, even those that dwell in celestial spheres!

I have realized this great Being who is effulgent like the sun beyond all darkness. Knowing Him alone one goes beyond death ; there is no other way.

Thou art the woman, Thou art the man, Thou art the youth and the maiden too. Thou art the old man who totters along leaning on the staff. Thou art born many-faced.

His form cannot be perceived within the range of senses. No one perceives Him with the eye. Those who know Him through the faculty of intuition, as thus seated in their hearts, become immortal.

These truths, when taught, shine forth only in the high-souled one who has supreme devotion to the teacher. Verily, these truths shine forth in the high-souled ones.

*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*  
(2.5, 3.8, 4.3, 4.20, 6.23)

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

With this issue *Prabuddha Bharata* enters the 92nd year of its publication. On this happy occasion we send our greetings and good wishes to our readers, contributors and friends all over the world.

Mayavati, the home of *Prabuddha Bharata* in the Himalayas, is a living monument to Swami Vivekananda's vision of the unity of life. This month's EDITORIAL is an attempt to recapture a glint of that vision and unravel the factors that remained veiled behind it.

'Dharma is what gives focus, direction and power to the diverse strands of our personality, it is what helps us build and organize our character so that it becomes a completely stable scaffolding for self-realization, so that we may channel the energies of our Higher Self into every aspect of our Daily life', says Dr. Margaret Bedrosian. In her article THE PYRAMID OF DHARMA she shows how the different levels of human endeavour constitute the pyramid of Dharma 'each stone of which has to be chosen with care'. The author is lecturer in English and comparative literature at the university of California, Davis.

Dr. M. Sivaramakrishna, Reader in English, Usmania University, Hyderabad, concludes the second instalment of his article RAMAKRISHNA AND SCIENCE by showing how the framework of Sri Ramakrishna's outlook fits in with three of the fundamental assumptions of modern science: indeterminacy, linguistic multivalence and relativity of values.

'Vedanta, at least as taught in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement, is *lived* religion', says Swami Yogeshananda who discusses in PRACTICAL VEDANTA IN THE ARTS some of the basic problems that a spiritual aspirant has to face in choosing art as a vocation, and shows how Vedanta solves these problems. The article forms a part of a series of talks that the author gave at the Vedanta Society of Houston in Texas, U.S.A.

In UPENDRA NATH MUKHOPADHYAYA Swami Chetanananda, spiritual head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, gives an interesting account of the life of one of Ramakrishna's lay disciples who in later life attained fame and wealth as the proprietor of Basumati Press.

## MAYAVATI—THE HOME OF UNITY IN THE HIMALAYAS

(EDITORIAL)

It is the same old Himalayas where the wandering monk, Vivekananda was returning. In these valleys and forests he first felt the vibrant presence of divinity in nature. To him the father of the mountains was *devatātmā*, 'ensouled by divinity'. It was to him, the repository of all the best and the highest in the Indian civilization. It was, indeed, the *mānasa*, 'the

standard by which all the other human civilizations, past, present and future, must be tested',<sup>1</sup> as he said.

For him it was a bliss to return to the same sublime valleys and deep forests in

1. Eastern and Western Admirers, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983) p 100.



whose rushing streams he first heard the sound of Śiva's drum—'Hara, Hara, Vyom, Vyom'. In the early years of his wandering life, he was virtually mad after these mountains. 'The eternal Himalayas', as he would say, 'rising tier above tier with their snow caps, look as it were into the very mysteries of heaven'.<sup>2</sup> Here during his early days of wandering, he moved alone with God, asking nothing and fearing none. Sometimes his brother-disciples followed him. Sometimes the unknown monk moved with his first disciple, carrying the disciple's shoes on his head, when the latter fell sick.

It was the Himalaya-fever, 'the devilish inwardness' as Vivekananda called it. It was the same haunting fascination for the deep woods and snowy mountains that had drawn the wandering monk in search of a life of total renunciation. 'Himalayas stand for that renunciation',<sup>3</sup> he said. Long ago, he confided to someone dear to him, 'I was never a missionary, nor ever would be one—my place is in the Himalayas'.<sup>4</sup>

In this very Himalayas, under a huge banyan tree at Almora he had, once long before, the sudden realization of the oneness of the microcosm and the macrocosm, the potentiality of the entire universe in a grain of sand.

In the austere Himalayan heights of Amarnath cave one day, he had 'come face to face there with the Lord Himself'.<sup>5</sup> It is here in a secluded corner of magnificent Chenars by the Dal Lake in Kashmir that he had spent seven most mystical days and

nights, listening to the vibrant voice of the Divine Mother at Kshir Bhavani. Here he worshipped the little virgin daughter of the temple priest as Umā Kumāri. In this valley, he heard the sound of 'Śivoham' in the spinning wheels of Kashmiri mothers. Here he was received with all kindness by the old Mussalman mother under the Chennar-tree, who sat in a farmyard and who told the Swami with all the dignity of the faithful, 'I thank our God, by the mercy of the Lord, I am a Mussalman'.<sup>6</sup> Here, in Kashmir, the Muslim boatmen 'watched the river in his absence for his return and servants disputed with guests to do him service'. Here, the wandering monk had moved for all these years, 'in the garments of the beggar despised by the alien, worshipped by the people'.<sup>7</sup> Here he stood in the true background of his homeless life—the background of cottage-roofs of common masses and lonely paths across cornfields.

Here, at Almora, on a new-moon night, he brought new life to his western daughter Nivedita by a sacred touch in the manner of Sri Ramakrishna. And that sacred touch transfigured her, and made her 'gazing deep into a Infinite Good'. That is how, she understood, 'the greatest masters bestow the Impersonal Vision'.<sup>8</sup>

It is in this Himalayan valley that his western disciples had seen in him 'a humility that wiped out all littleness, a renunciation that would die for scorn of oppression and pity of the oppressed, a love that would bless even the oncoming feet of torture and of death'. Here his disciples saw the 'awakening of the holy child' in their Master Vivekananda.

A pilgrim who had seen him suddenly at the turn of a mountainous path stood

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) Vol. 3, p. 285.

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) 7:354.

4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) 7:467.

5. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1972) Vol. 1, p. 92.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 73

7. *Ibid.*, p. 277

8. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

transixed with the words 'Śiva, Śiva'. In this abode of Śiva, he indeed became Śiva himself. His presence brought such spiritual sublimity in the atmosphere that his disciples would hear in the quivering of the palm trees the cry of 'Mahādeva! Mahādeva! Mahādeva!'<sup>9</sup>

Here the people saw in him the face of the prophet. In Nainital a Mohammedan gentleman for the first time accepted him as God-sent. 'Swamiji, if aftertimes any claim you as an Avatar, remember that, I, a Mohammedan, am the first'.<sup>10</sup> the gentleman said. Here like Christ and Buddha, he had received with extreme kindness and compassion the two nautch girls who had come to speak to him and sought for his blessings. And this the monk did even in the face of loud protests from pundits.<sup>11</sup>

It is in this Himalayas that he, probably after his vision of the immortal Amarnath, lifted a couple of pebbles in his hand and said, 'Whenever death approaches me, all weakness vanishes...for I have touched the feet of God.' Here he heard the eternal chanting of Ganga flowing with a sound 'Hara! Hara! The free! The free!'<sup>12</sup> 'That is how', he realized, 'one should leave his body in the midst of the Himalayan freedom'.

It is here in the Himalayan valleys that he would sometimes get buried in the dream of his favourite saint Śuka—'The ideal paramahansa'. Again and again he would speak of this great ideal in his life,

To him alone amongst men was it given to drink a handful of the waters of that one undivided ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda—existence, knowledge and bliss absolute! Most saints die, having heard only the thunder of Its waves upon the

shore. A few gain the vision—and still fewer, taste of It. But he drank of the Sea of Bliss!<sup>13</sup>

And he would recite with exuberance of joy the celebrated line, '“I know, and Shuka knows, and *perhaps* Vyāsa knows—a little”, says Shiva'.

To those who knew him, he stood out, in his utter egolessness and lack of body-consciousness, as an embodiment of his own ideal 'Suka'. His master Sri Ramakrishna used to call him lovingly, 'My Shuka'.<sup>14</sup> Did he not know that like Śuka he was destined to bring the Ganga of the *Bhāgavatam*, the gospel of the essential divinity and unity of life, to a world suffering from a drought of the soul? Was he not aware that he was destined to save humanity which, like the unfortunate king Parīkṣit, was poisoned to death by the cobra of a sensate culture, and which, despite all the superabundance of material wealth, was waiting for countdown to a meaningless extinction?

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It is the same old Himalayas. But today the wandering monk was returning to these dark and deep woods after years of back-breaking labour both in the East and the West, for establishing Vedanta as the religion of future humanity. He was nearing his end. Today he was trudging home through the thick white snow of the opening days of the twentieth century. For the first time he was going to visit Mayavati, the 'Himalayan centre as well as a place for western disciples'.<sup>15</sup> He wanted to have a place solely dedicated to the worship of One All-pervading Reality: The Advaita. In this home of unity there

9. Ibid., p. 276.

10. Ibid., p. 284.

11. Ibid., p. 285.

12. Ibid., p. 47.

13. Ibid., p. 294-95

14. Ibid.

15. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1973) 5:123.

would be no worship of personal gods and goddesses. In this 'alien land' of the world this would be Vivekananda's only home—a home for the unification of the East and the West, of all mankind under the protection and inspiration of Advaita Vedanta.

It was in the snowy heights of Switzerland that Vivekananda's idea of an Advaita Ashrama first began to crystallize. To a friend of Almora he wrote on 5 August 1896, 'I want to start a Math at Almora or near Almora rather'. In November of the same year he reminded the same friend, 'We want a whole hill, with a view of snow range, all to ourselves.'<sup>16</sup> The prophet was, in fact, dreaming of his future at Mayavati. 'It will be a centre for work and meditation', he said, 'where my Indian and western disciples can live together and then I shall train as workers, the former to go out as preachers of Vedanta in the West, and the latter to devote their lives to the good of India'.<sup>17</sup>

In March 1899 he sent the draft of the prospectus for Mayavati. In 1900 January, a year before Vivekananda himself came to Mayavati, the prospectus first appeared in the *Prabuddha Bharata*, the first English journal that was published from Mayavati under the direct inspiration and guidance of the prophet.

#### THE ADVAITA ASHRAMA HIMALAYAS

In Whom is the Universe, Who is in the Universe,  
'Who is the Universe; in Whom is the Soul,  
Who is in the Soul, Who is the Soul of Man;  
knowing Him—and therefore the Universe—as  
our Self, alone extinguishes all fear, brings an  
end to misery and leads to Infinite Freedom.

Wherever there has been expansion in love or progress in well-being, of individuals or numbers, it has been through the perception, realisation and the practicalisation of the Eternal Truth—THE ONENESS OF ALL BEINGS. 'Dependence is misery, Independence is happiness.' The Advaita is the only system which gives unto man complete possession of himself, takes off all dependence and its associated superstitions, thus making us brave to suffer, brave to do, and in the long run attain to Absolute Freedom.

Hitherto it has not been possible to preach this Noble Truth entirely free from the settings of dualistic weakness; this alone, we are convinced, explains why it has not been more operative and useful to mankind at large.

To give this ONE TRUTH, a freer and fuller scope in elevating the lives of individuals and leavening the mass of mankind, we start the Advaita Ashrama on the Himalayan heights, the land of its first expiration.

Here it is hoped to keep Advaita free from all superstitions and weakening contaminations. Here will be taught and practised nothing but the Doctrine of Unity, pure and simple; and though in entire sympathy with all other systems, this Ashrama is dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone.<sup>18</sup>

The main lines along which the work is to be carried on are necessarily educational and consist of sending out trained teachers and issuing publications. Arrangements, therefore, are in course of progress for training Indian and European men and women side by side, for Advaita work in the East and West. All men and women who believe in the uplifting power of the Advaita and are ready to make their lives one with the GREAT LIFE and to help others in doing so, are invited to join the Ashrama and assist in the carrying out of its object in the manner best suited to each individual circumstances.<sup>19</sup>

Vivekananda was not so much interested to give a new intellectual interpretation of Advaita Vedanta, or just to found a Himalayan retreat for his western disciples. His primary motif was man-making, the creation of a new generation of 'spiritual

16. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1978) 6:383.

17. *Eastern and Western Disciples, The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965) p. 423.

18. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1973) 5:435-36.

19. *Prabuddha Bharata* (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama) January 1900 and also *Brahmavadin* (Madras) December 1899.

humanity' as he told years before, to Junnagadh Dewan Haridas Beharidas Desai. Vivekananda's another disciple Sister Christine wrote that her master's dream was to create a new band of 'supermen' and 'superwomen' who will be combining western dynamism and Indian spirituality in their own lives. And Mayavati would be, as Vivekananda dreamt, the Himalayan Centre for training this new generation in the Advaitic way. In his San Francisco lecture 'Is Vedanta the Future Religion?' Vivekananda explained this Himalayan dream:

Everyone says that the highest, the pure truth cannot be realised all at once by all, that men have to be led to it gradually through worship, prayer, and other kinds of prevalent religious practices. I am not sure whether that is the right method or not. In India I work both ways.

In Calcutta, I have all these images and temples—in the name of God and the Vedas, of the Bible and Christ and Buddha. Let it be tried. But in the heights of the Himalayas I have a place where I am determined nothing shall enter except pure truth. There I want to work out this idea about which I have spoken to you today [the teaching of Advaita Vedanta]. There are an Englishman and an Englishwoman in charge of the place. The purpose is to train seekers of truth and to bring up children without fear and without superstition. They shall not hear about Christs and Buddhas and Shivas and Vishnus—none of these. They shall learn, from the start, to stand upon their own feet. They shall learn, from their childhood that God is the spirit and should be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Everyone must be looked upon as spirit. That is the ideal. I do not know what success will come of it. Today I am preaching the thing I like. I wish I had been brought up entirely on that, without all the dualistic superstitions. . 20

On 3 January 1901, Vivekananda reached this home of unity, of Advaita, in Mayavati.

A year before he wrote to his brother-disciple, 'I am going to the Himalayas soon to retire for ever. My work is done.'<sup>21</sup> He was only thirty-seven. But the last two years of incessant struggle both in India and abroad had taken from him, as he said, twenty years of his life. Utterly exhausted, today he supported himself with a staff and on the shoulders of his disciples. His days were numbered. He would not live for more than one year and a half. He told his disciple, 'You see, my son, now I am coming to the end!'<sup>22</sup>

This dream of an Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati was fulfilled by Vivekananda's two English disciples, -Captain Sevier and Mrs. Sevier. To them in London he gave the responsibility of building up this Himalayan home. They responded forthwith and followed their master right up to the Himalayas. Within three years, with intense labour and personal sacrifice they built up the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati. The austerities and rigours of this labour told heavily upon Capt. Sevier's life. A few months before the Swami could reach, Capt. Sevier died quietly at Mayavati. The ashramites made his last rites in the Hindu way by the side of the small rivulet below the gorges of the Ashrama. On that sacred and secluded spot there stands no monument. That was the Advaita wish of Capt. Sevier. He passed away like a 'martyr', as Vivekananda loved to say with the deepest respect and gratitude to the departed soul. Mrs. Sevier continued at Mayavati and waited for her master Vivekananda to step into the Ashrama on this snow-white morning.

In this home of Advaita, Vivekananda would not like any one to lean on any kind of dualistic worship or ritual. But to

<sup>21</sup>. Ibid., p. 483.

<sup>22</sup>. *Life of Swami Vivekananda* (1981) Vol. 2, p. 367.

<sup>20</sup>. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1977) 8:139-41.

his surprise, one day he discovered a small shrine where his disciples were worshipping the great Master, Sri Ramakrishna. That evening the lion of Advaita Vedanta roared. Vivekananda thundered like Gaudapāda, or Astāvakra, or Sankara. Vehemently he spoke that in this Advaita Ashrama it should be the endeavour of the seekers of God to live only on the subjective side of religion, such as meditation and study of the scriptures. At least in this place one should try to rise above all rituals and worship of personal gods, thus freeing oneself from any dependence on this God or that book. Here in this Himalayan home one should and must derive all his strength from the infinite Divinity within. Here one should live on the infinite bliss and consciousness that is within all of us. That evening one could feel in Vivekananda's voice the vibrant music of Sankara's *Nirvāṇa-śaṭkam*—*Cīdānandarūpah Śivoham, Śivoham*. The words of the Master lifted the minds of the disciples.

Ramakrishna-worship, or for that matter any ritual or worship was felt unnecessary from that day onwards in this home of Advaita. Today when you go to Mayavati you see a picture of Madonna with the holy child and a Buddha face in the small dining room. A portrait of Vivekananda hangs on the staircase wall. A picture of Ramakrishna stands above the fire place. No incantations or flowers are offered to them. A few steps out, and the Mayavati garden with its superabundance of roses, poppies and dahlias stands out as a perpetual shrine silently worshipping the 'One Reality, beyond all form and colour, beyond time and space', as Vivekananda used to sing.

But once Vivekananda reached Mayavati, he felt jubilant. His dream had come to

reality! The all-white panorama of the wintry Himalayas reminded him that he was now with the All-white Śiva, the transcendent and the eternally meditative one. His joy knew no bounds. He wrote to a beloved one, 'The snow is lying all round six inches deep, the sun is bright and glorious'.<sup>23</sup> His spirit soared high.

He consoled the bereaved heart of Mother Sevier. His very presence brought, as if the sudden resurrection of a spring in the midst of this severe winter. He talked, wrote and inspired all in order to boost up his dream child of the Advaitic vision—the *Prabuddha Bharata*. A few days later he went to visit the highest hilltop nearby, the Dharmagarh peak, with the joy of a child. A grand view of the four hundred miles of snowpeaks stretched unobstructed right before his eyes. This unspeakable sublimity had always haunted him. He loved to quote the king Yudhiṣṭhira's love for the Himalayas, 'Behold, my queen, the Himalayas, how grand and beautiful they are: I love them. They do not give me anything, but my nature is to love the grand, the beautiful'.<sup>24</sup> On this blessed spot he desired to build a hermitage where he could meditate undisturbed. Like a boy unfettered from all the worries he moved by the small lake of Mayavati and declared that soon he would give up all public work and pass his days writing books and whistling merry tunes with the birds. 'Thought will be clear in the sight of snows',<sup>25</sup> he once wrote. Here sublimity pours in along with the dew drops and the rustling of the pine trees. Here one can, as Vivekananda did, sing high the Song of the Sannyasin:

Wake up the note! the song that had its birth  
Far off, where worldly taint could never reach.

<sup>24</sup>. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) 1:12.

<sup>25</sup>. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1977) 8:400.

<sup>23</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 570.

In mountain caves and glades of forest deep,  
Whose calm no sigh for lust or wealth of fame  
Could ever dare to break; where rolled the  
stream of knowledge, truth, and bliss that follows  
both. Sing high that note, Sannyasin bold! Say—  
'Om Tat Sat, Om!'<sup>26</sup>

Now the dream of a future Mayavati consumed him. He saw with his prophetic vision that the monks at Mayavati would meditate for long hours in the Himalayan solitude. But once the meditation was over they would carry baskets of apples on their head and sell them in the market below. The distinction between knowledge and action would be removed for ever in Mayavati. And Mayavati literally fulfilled the words of the prophet.

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Greek civilization was buried in the Aegian Isles because the Greek philosophers refused to 'return' to the market place of life, leaving their ivory towers of knowledge. Vivekananda stemmed that danger for India by creating a historic way for the regeneration and continuation of the ancient Indian culture. 'The Paragon of Advaita Vedanta', as an eminent western philosopher would call him, did return from his Himalayan dream of Mayavati to the burning plains of India. The cry of the famished gulls, the hungry humanity, was as irresistible a call to him as the mandate of his master Sri Ramakrishna who one day asked him to spread out like the branches of a great Banyan tree. True to the words of his Master, Vivekananda indeed grew into a great life-giving Banyan, with Buddha's heart and Śaṅkara's brain, with Śuka's purity and a cyclonic monk's dynamism. His Master knew that under the shade of this great Banyan,

tired souls would one day come for rest and providence.

Vivekananda knew his own destiny. He knew that he had a message for the modern world. It was the message of Vedanta which only could meet the challenges of modern science and materialism. 'His was the modern mind in its completeness', wrote his western disciple. 'In his consciousness the ancient light...shone on all those questions and all those puzzles which are present to thinkers and workers of the modern world.'<sup>27</sup> His disciple wrote:

'He might appear to take up any subject, literary, ethnological or scientific, but he always made us feel it as illustration of the Ultimate Vision. There was, for him, nothing secular.'<sup>28</sup> 'Art, Science and Religion', he said once, 'are but three different ways of expressing a single truth. But in order to understand this we must have the theory of Advaita.'<sup>29</sup>

In South India he declared that he was born to save India by the message of Practical Vedanta, as Śaṅkara had once saved India from the enveloping darkness of Buddhistic Nihilism by the reasonings of intellectual Advaita.

His role was to bring down this great philosophy from the mountain tops to the very heart of daily life. To Indians he declared his historic message:

But one defect which lay in the Advaita was its being worked out so long on the spiritual plane only, and nowhere else; now, the time has come when you have to make it practical. It shall no more be a rahasya, a secret. It shall no more live with monks in caves and forests, and in the Himalayas; it must come down to the daily, everyday life of the people; it shall be worked out in the palace of the king, in the cave of the recluse; it shall be worked out in the cottage of the poor, by the beggar in the

<sup>26</sup>. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) 4:392-93.

<sup>27</sup>. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (1972) 1:74.

<sup>28</sup>. Ibid. p. 279.

<sup>29</sup>. Ibid. p. 10.



street, everywhere; anywhere it can be worked out.<sup>30</sup>

Who would work as the protagonists for this dynamic religion, this Practical Vedanta? The epoch-making ideas of Sri Ramakrishna would create, he believed, the band of 'Superman' and 'Superwoman'. And the Advaita Ashrama in the Himalayas would be place from where such personalities would be shaped. He was waiting for their coming.

At Almora he spoke to Indians:

Strong souls from all quarters of this earth, in time to come, will be attracted to this Father of mountains, when all this fight between sects and all those differences in dogmas will not be remembered any more, and quarrels between your religion and my religion will have vanished altogether, when mankind will understand that there is but the eternal religion, and this is the perception of the divine within, and the rest is mere froth.<sup>31</sup>

Had Vivekananda been all Advaita, all intellect, all knowledge, all meditation, all withdrawal from humanity, he would certainly cease to be the Vivekananda whom we know today. With him, intellect, however superior, was always subservient to heart. His intense longing for meditation and solitary living, however fascinating, would at once give way to his overpowering passion which responded to all kinds of human suffering. Love was his undoing. Heart was unquestionably dominant over intellect in his life. It is due to the supremacy of heart that his dream of living the life of a Himalayan hermit was shattered eight years before. The news of his sister's suicide had thrown him out for ever from the solitary cave of Almora where he decided to live alone in

meditation for the rest of life. The pain was excruciating beyond words. And it flung him down for ever on the burning plains of life for the regeneration of *women and the masses*. To a beloved mother he wrote:

I went years ago to the Himalayas, never to come back; and my sister committed suicide, the news reached me there, and that weak heart flung me off from that prospect of peace... Peace I have sought, but the heart, that seat of Bhakti, would not allow me to find it. Struggle and torture, torture and struggle.<sup>32</sup>

As his Advaitic vision matured, and he began to see the visible manifestation of God everywhere, the struggle ceased. His disciples feel that their master's interpretation of the world was based on his direct realization that 'God is the Universe—not within it, or outside it, and not the universe God, or the image of God—but He it, the All.'<sup>33</sup> As this Advaita vision deepened, an all-encompassing love dawned in his heart. And this love came down with a tempestuous fury, in order to help mankind out of all kinds of sufferings—physical, intellectual or spiritual—everywhere and everywhen. He talked of Love that translates Advaita, the unity of life, into action. What is love? 'Love is the expression of infinite unity of existence', he would say, bringing at once the long-sought synthesis of Jñāna and Bhakti. Vivekananda knew fully well the limitations of intellect. He realized from his own experiences the all-conquering power of heart. To the westerners he exposed the sad results of a purely intellectual culture.

Intellect has been cultured with the result that hundreds of sciences have been discovered, and their effect has been that the few have made

30. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1973) 3:427.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 354.

32. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1978) 6:420.

33. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (1972) 1:293.

slaves of the many—that is all the good that has been done.

Through the intellect is not the way to solve the problem of misery, but through the heart.

A pure heart sees beyond the intellect; it gets inspired. It knows things that reason can never know, and whenever there is conflict between the pure heart and the intellect, always side with the pure heart, even if you think what your heart is doing is unreasonable<sup>34</sup>

And this predominance of heart inspired Vivekananda to work intensely for the good of humanity until the last day of his life. In his life the meditative transcendence of Śiva was combined with intense activity of Śakti, the Divine Mother. What Sri Ramakrishna called Kālī, the Primeaval energy, never ceased to inspire this Śuka-like child to carry the nectar of Vedanta from one corner of the globe to the other. Are not Śiva's transcendence and Mother's power one and the same thing? Are not the fire and its burning power one and the same thing? That was the corner-stone of Sri Ramakrishna's message. The calm sea and its tempestuous surface are two faces of the *One* and the same Reality. According to Vedanta in personal God or in the incarnations of God, knowledge (*jñāna*) goes hand in hand with will (*icchā*) and action (*kriyā*). In Vivekananda's life the 'philosopher with idea' was combined with the 'philosopher in action'. Knowledge (*jñāna*) was yoked to Will (*icchā*) to do good to the world. And the Pure Will was translated into Action (*kriyā*).

This knowledge born of the Advaitic vision, this ripe Bhakti, as Ramakrishna used to say, today flows, like Ganga, on the plains. Advaita is translated into action all over the world in hundreds of Vedanta centres and temples, schools, colleges, hospitals, flood and famine relief centres and huge institutions for rural and

tribal developments. These are the new temples of divine worship. Here the deity is 'man'. 'I worship that God who by the ignorant is called man', Vivekananda declared long before. Here the only worship that incessantly goes on is service—service of food to the hungry, of education to the illiterate, of spiritual strength to souls weary of a sensate culture.

This is a new worship of the One God in countless human beings irrespective of caste, creed and nationality. It is a new gospel, a gospel not of propitiating deities for selfish ends or even for personal salvation, but the sacrifice of a Buddha-life 'for the good of many, for the welfare of many'. It is a new gospel inspiring the prophet's followers to manifest divinity in their own lives and then to worship the same ever-present divinity in the weak, in the illiterate, in the saints and sinners alike. 'Hitherto the great fault of our Indian religion has lain in its knowing only two words—renunciation and Mukti. Only Mukti *here!* Nothing for the householders! . But these are the very people I want to help,'<sup>35</sup> he said.

His call evoked genuine response from the purest hearts. Hundreds of young men and women gifted with purity, culture and intellect today have left their hearth and home and have come up for building up their splendid spiritual lives by dwelling on the Spiritual Infinitude of life, and by egoless service to the Spirit in man. Mayavati, as Vivekananda desired, has trained saintly intellectuals who have carried the spiritual message of Advaita to the West for nearly a century. Mayavati, again, has produced saintly workers who have put into practice the idea of the Advaitic vision, of One God in entire

<sup>34</sup>. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1977) 1:414.

<sup>35</sup>. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (1972) 1:140.



humanity. The dream of 'Advaita', the holistic vision of life has become today dynamic and practical in the market place of life. And this is the justification of the prophet's vision at Mayavati—a vision of the essential divinity and unity of mankind.

Secluded from the world of men by the dark woods of sky-touching cedars, cypresses, oaks, and pines, Mayavati today stands in the midst of the same meditative silence that had once haunted the wander-

ing friar. Standing on its precincts you see even today the same vast range of magnificent snow-peaks that Vivekananda had seen nearly a century before. In the small campus as you walk from the *Prabuddha Bharata* Building down to the Ashrama Hospital below, you feel for yourself how the devotees of Vivekananda, following the footsteps of their master, combined knowledge with service into a single worship of the *One All-Pervading Reality*.

## THE PYRAMID OF DHARMA

DR MARGARET BEDROSIAN

I am all that a man may desire  
Without transgressing  
The law of his nature.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps more than any other concept of the Hindu tradition, dharma addresses the needs of contemporary men and women confused about their roles and their responsibility to themselves and the world at large. Without doubt, dharma is one of the most subtle and compelling of values, testing our self knowledge at every turn. If people are often at a loss as to how they are to discover this thread that leads to the divine, it is no surprise for we live in a time when the social customs and restrictions of previous ages have little impact on our way of life, when the individual strives to free himself of the strictures of the ancestors and find himself independently. Yet in the midst of these increasingly distracted times when the

material crust of life shines with less hope the thicker it gets, learning how to detect the call of dharma and then giving oneself in service to it requires more discrimination and imagination than any other part of the spiritual path.

Originally, dharma referred to the web of moral and religious duty that bound the individual to the larger social fabric. Dharma held the social order intact; it gave the individual integrity. In a sense, this definition is still useful today, but whereas earlier ages held forth a clear—and often narrow—ideal of what moral and religious duty comprised and gave the individual a more or less unambiguous response to his actions, our own times have relegated these terms to the attic trunk without substitutes. As a result, our collective allegiance to traditional notions of morality is slippery with the indulgence of the times, yet we are haunted by a sense—for many, an inarticulate sense—that *nothing* is holding together our daily lives; we feel as though we are speeding toward nowhere. The only possible

1. *The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (New York: New American Library, 1944) p. 71. Subsequent references to this work appear in the text.

conclusion millions of people draw is anxious and filled with dread: at any moment, life will fall apart. It's a nightmare. And not all of us wake up from it. Instead, countless people find themselves caught in a stupor of addictions, dulling their awareness of how little control they have over their fate.

Luckily, most of us are aware enough to know that the poisons that turn off our minds only complicate the problem. We find ourselves much like Arjuna, with our brains whirling 'round and round', trying to get a hold of the centre. In the following pages, I'd like to briefly plunge into a fathomless subject, the dialectic on dharma as set forth in the Bhagavad Gita and suggest how Krishna's response to Arjuna's confusion is still one of the wisest resources we have in contemporary life in the quest for a righteous life.

Arjuna's plight has been commented on for centuries: he's a superb warrior who all of a sudden gets cold feet on the battleground. It's a situation that many of us can identify with: having spent years, decades, perfecting our work, the day comes when we just can't go through with it one more time, heart and spirit rebel. The excuses tumble out of our mouths, and as many commentators have suggested, Arjuna's refusal to fight hints of rationalization: there is an element of fear perhaps as he faces the thousands of kinsmen turned foe. But his fear isn't just a simple attack of nerves; he is too great a fighter for this and his character has evolved to a state where he isn't likely to fall into sloth. His trouble seems located elsewhere, in the region of the psyche where we stand impotent as we face several alternatives. His very first words to Krishna suggest his confusion as he finds himself in the middle:

Krishna the changeless  
Halt my chariot

There where the warriors,  
Bold for the battle,  
Face their foemen.  
Between the armies  
There let me see them. (30)

Isn't this the existential backdrop to every moment of our lives? The awareness that armies of choices and conflicting demands press for our loyalty, for our warrior gifts? How to choose, and how to save our skin! I find Arjuna's conduct from the very beginning an apt model for any age of how one investigates the requirements of dharma: he addresses the changeless, the central consciousness that anchors all else. Though he does not yet perceive the full extent of Krishna's identity, Arjuna shows enough faith in the charioteer to at least turn to him for advice. He doesn't make the mistake of assuming his own perceptions are enough to get him out of his dilemma. Only with the changeless supporting him, does he face the armies and his choices. Similarly, any of us trying to get a grip on our lives have to find a place to grip in the midst of the flux; even if we can't see it for what it is yet, the *idea* of the changeless must become the ground where faith is planted. At the very least, this faith initiates a dialogue that activates different levels of the unconscious to seek alignment with the Higher Self.

Though Krishna smiles at Arjuna's sorrow—and what else can God do when the part forgets it's the whole!—he responds with thoroughness and sympathy to his friend's dilemma. Arjuna veils his fear of personal death by bemoaning the collapse of the world order, or world dharma, if he goes ahead with his own duty as a warrior. This too is a feeling many of us will understand: once when I was much younger, during my second year of graduate school, I entered a panic-stricken stage when fear and loathing took

over daily life. The hallways of the university seemed riddled by demonic intelligences eager to seduce me from the 'spiritual life'. I would lose my soul if I learned their game and completed what I had set out to do. I would lose my innocence. Of course, in the process I would also have to face all the demons that lurked in my own mind and heart, instead of projecting them onto the academic hallways. Running away guarantees that such fears are never lured out into the open: we can always take refuge in a convenient distaste for the mundane and tawdry. At the time, I wasn't aware of any of this, although I suspected that my depression wasn't just a simple reaction to academic sophistry. All I really knew was that I had gotten myself into this impasse and that my spiritual teacher would help. After I had rushed through the details of my little crisis and reached a crescendo with, 'I'm afraid my work is blocking my spiritual path', he smiled, waved his hand, and succinctly set me straight: 'It's just a chapter of your life. Do it and be done with it.' I had never doubted that he'd say something like this: life doesn't impel us into radically new directions very often. Usually one phase, or 'chapter', grows naturally out of the previous one, and only if we have learned or completed the lessons of one can the new unfold. Ten years later, I remember this period with gratitude and amazement: I did finish graduate school, accompanied by this and many other crises; but only by finishing was I able to discover the unconventional work that I finally claimed as my own; only by finishing did I begin to burn up some of the karma that had delivered me to the university.

Similarly, Krishna's initial response to Arjuna's sorrow brings focus to his actual dilemma: 'Bodies are said to die, but

That which possesses the body is eternal. It cannot be limited, or destroyed. Therefore you must fight.' Our fear of dying, which is ironically the one thing that *can't* happen to us, drives us to make choices that take us away from liberation. What Krishna argues here is that the body is never what we are fighting for; the purpose of being true to our dharma is that this enables us to burn up or transform our karma in the most efficient way possible. It ripens the individual self and the seeds of those abilities we've been born with so that these may be surrendered to God at last. But though the power of ripening comes from God, only the human being can make the choice to turn to that Power and to discover the specifics of his dharma. And only the human being can make the decision to lay down all duties in God, the goal of dharma.

Having established the need to be true to one's natural duty, Krishna comes back periodically throughout his discourse to the question of how one discovers this dharma in the first place. Echoing through the frenetic and scattered dynamics of the modern age, his comments may seem sketchy. We in the West especially, where the boundaries of social caste are porous and where old authority structures only go so far in helping us discover our path, can use all the help we can get. From the outset, we must be clear that dharma is not just a simple concept of duty, at least not in these times. Nor does dharma pertain only to that area of our lives called 'livelihood', the means to financial security. Dharma is what gives focus, direction, and power to the diverse strands of our personality; it is what helps us build and organize our character so that it becomes a completely stable scaffolding for self-realization, so that we may channel the energies of the Higher Self into every aspect of our daily life. Dharma, in short,

is much like a spiritual pyramid: it has to be conceived of as a holy structure with a holy purpose. And as one devotee friend put it, each stone has to be chosen with care, with an eye to its appropriateness in the larger plan. No wonder it takes such a long time to build.

Whenever we use the analogy of the pyramid, which was of course a sacred structure for the ancient Egyptians, we can't help but remember the most important facet of dharma, that it leads to a higher state of being. An individual who is nurturing his talents and making a 'success' of his life may have a lot of ambition and may contribute to the world in a great way. But he isn't practicing his dharma unless he has an image of how this exercise contributes to the collective dharma and his own evolution toward union with God. Without this sensitivity, it becomes all too easy to do things by whim or to be cowed into retreat from experiences that might ripen us. This is why our choice of a Chosen Ideal is so crucial. The ideal keeps reminding us that there is a larger reality waiting at the end of the path and yet shows us that each step of the path must be taken consciously. Anecdotes that illustrate this are everywhere in the lives of world teachers. Ramakrishna's life especially is a textbook on the nuances of dharma. One of my favourite accounts concerns his attention to domestic detail: as recorded by Swami Nikhilananda in his biography, *Holy Mother*, the Master's advice was the essence of practicality and showed a fine awareness of how the different strands of life must be braided:

...in regard to such practical matters as travelling, he asked [Sarada Devi] her always to be the first to get into a boat, railway compartment so that she could occupy a good seat, and to be the last to come out so that she might not, in her hurry, forget her luggage. He taught her that in arranging objects of domestic use one must

think out beforehand where particular articles were to be kept. What was frequently required must be kept near at hand and other things at a distance. When an article was temporarily removed from its place, it should be put back in exactly the same place so that one might not fail to find it even in the dark. He taught her how to roll the wick of an oil lamp, dress vegetables, and prepare betel leaves. He repeatedly told her to fit her conduct to the time, place, and circumstances, and the nature the people she had to deal with. He asked her not to hurt anyone's feelings. 'If you see a lame person,' he taught her, 'do not directly ask him why he walks that way.' He emphasized that she should have friendly feelings for all<sup>2</sup>.

I have cited this passage at such great length because it is such an accessible illustration of dharma in practice. Ramakrishna's advice shows a fine balancing of attention to one's own needs and sensitivity to the needs of others, and proves that common sense is basic to any higher development of consciousness: it is important to find a good seat when travelling and to have one's daily articles arranged rationally. Similarly, it is important to discriminate as to the types of people one deals with; time, place, and circumstance affect our conduct, and teach us how to manifest the same friendliness while altering our social roles. As a whole, the habits Ramakrishna was trying to instill in all of us through the example set by the Holy Mother suggest how interconnected spiritual development is with the daily organization of one's life. When the little matters are taken care of as thoughtfully as the big ones, the world can't help but become a friendlier place for we will have brought consciousness to each corner of our lives. Lit up by the same care, each area helps create a unified space where the

2. Swami Nikhilananda, *Holy Mother* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, 1962) p. 39.

task of self-realization proceeds harmoniously.

Returning to Krishna's discourse on karma yoga, we hear him refer time and time again to another imperative in the discovery and practice of dharma. At one point he says, 'duty well done fulfills desire' (45); then he continues, 'It is better to do your own duty, however imperfectly than to assume the duties of another person, however successfully. Prefer to die doing your own duty: the duty of another will bring you into great spiritual danger' (48). Yet later, he repeats this notion: 'When a man acts according to the law of his nature, he cannot be sinning. Therefore no one should give up his natural work, even though he does it imperfectly. For all action is involved in imperfection like fire in smoke' (127). Krishna's unrelenting emphasis on the naturalness of our dharma deserves prolonged, indeed lifelong, contemplation, especially in an age when the meaning of 'natural' is so obscured by all the unnatural processes and substances filling our lives and bodies. During the time of the Mahabharata, one's 'natural duty' was more clearly defined than it is now: considerations of caste and respect for the traditions of the ancestors moulded the individual to their imperatives. One could take comfort in conforming to the forms perhaps because the freedoms we've come to value in the Western world hadn't driven the questions of naturalness deeper into those lonely amorphous spaces where we struggle for reassurance. If we suspect that we are not doing our natural work, the 'correction' isn't simply made by stopping to do that work, just as a full state of natural well-being, i.e. health, isn't achieved immediately after we begin to change our diets and cleanse our bodies. Instead, in both cases there is an interim period where we slowly learn to listen

anew to our original wisdom and wholeness. Depending on how badly we've abused our bodies or neglected the gifts we've been born with, it may or may not take a long time to recover this awareness of what is natural to us. No one can transmit to us that animal well-being that stands for complete health; but when we have achieved it, we *know* it. Energy and calm are with us throughout the day, our body functions as part of the natural order stressing and relaxing by turn, we fall asleep without effort and wake up refreshed and happy to be alive. The body functions as nature planned for it to and the parts work together to serve that higher value of spiritual health

By extension, no one can tell us exactly what it's like to have discovered our natural work, our natural duty, or our natural gifts. But just as a healthy body takes intrinsic joy in its activity—whether it's taking a walk, playing basketball, typing a letter, or chopping up vegetables—*without* lusting after the outcome, the person who has discovered his or her natural work and abilities will find an innate satisfaction in the doing of the task. Obviously, such satisfaction makes it infinitely easier to fulfil the demands of karma yoga as defined by Krishna in Chapter 4 of the Gita:

The seers say truly  
That he is wise  
Who acts without lust or scheming  
For the fruit of the act;  
His act falls from him,  
Its chain is broken (52)

Of course, it may still be that a person will cash in and scheme after ways to turn his abilities into material profits—this is understandable and necessary up to the point where our livelihood depends on intelligent husbandry; and as an interim stage in our evolution, it's better to exploit

our natural abilities than those that aren't ours. But the converse point is perhaps even more important in a world that seems to have gone amok with greed: whenever we are coming closer to serving those gifts that are naturally ours, the material gains of such work take a back seat to the actual doing; it's just like giving the body the form of sweets it naturally craves in the form of fruit, food which satisfies the appetite and squelches the confusing desire for more concentrated sugars found in candies and cookies. Once we rediscover the joys of sattvic fruits, we're not likely to lust after and indulge in addicting sugars that can never feed the body. Similarly, once we discover and act on our dharma, we tend to abuse ourselves less and less with frenetic and inflated desires for wealth and power that distract us from our real needs: our actions become their own fruit; they fall from us, their chain broken because they fulfil rather than muddle our desire for self-expression. Being around people who have learned the secret of dharma becomes a high form of holy company: they radiate a contentment that helps the rest of the world 'fall into place'; because they are not likely to be chasing after the inconsequential, they help clean up the psychological litter left by millions of their confused brethren. We've all seen such people in action and in rest: absorbed in meaningful work, they don't waste energy backbiting or belittling others; though they may not own much, they don't seem to have stumbled into the world by accident as so many of us have—they are full planetary citizens; and though their work may or may not be complex or skilled, their steadfastness and focus holds together society. As a result, they demonstrate how the needs of the individual and the collective are meant to be naturally harmonized.

Just as our body's needs change through

the periods of our lives, requiring adjustments to our diets, our rest, our work to maintain health, our dharma will also undergo changes as we burn up karma and discover new areas of ability and desire. If we are sensitive to our life rhythms, these shifts will be as natural as dharma itself. And yet, the number of mid-life crises people fall into and the unaccountable depression that seeps into so many of our lives now and then indicate how easily we can ignore new directions of growth. When we are in tune, with our dharma, life has zest and interest. It doesn't merely satisfy us through a dry adherence to duty. Periods of transition are always tricky; because the ego can disguise our true motives, such periods raise many questions that take time and patience to answer; some of these include Arjuna's query to Krishna: is this genuine compassion I feel for the men I'm about to kill or a dread of following through on my responsibility? Arjuna is lucky to have God Himself at his right hand for immediate referral; the rest of us may have to use more indirect means. One clue that can't be overlooked is a *persistent* dissatisfaction in one's life; if for example our journal entries for several years show that we fall into deep depression or get the flu every time we come home from a vacation, this may signal the need to adjust. If in the midst of a successful career, we notice that we no longer feel the old excitement planning a new project—no matter how competently we do the work—then it is time to take stock. A natural way of life implies a progression through seasons; and the evolution of our dharma reflects these seasonal changes, a fact the Hindus sensibly recognized when they delineated the four stages of life. But it may be that some of us may have to go through seven stages, or ten, to complete the higher purpose of our life:

the point is that we have to undergo the death of the old structures if spirit is to continue streaming through the peak of our pyramid. It is in this sense that the old-fashioned concept of righteousness, a value that Krishna upholds to Arjuna as he counsels him to fight (p. 38), recovers its lost meaning; the conventional meaning of righteousness centres on morally upright or just behaviour in keeping with clearly defined sanctions. But it is hard to see how anyone can truly engage in socially just conduct, in which the needs of individuals are balanced and harmonized for the greater good of the whole, when one's inner life is not balanced and harmonized in keeping with dharma. Where, after all, would the discrimination come from to detect a righteous war from an unrighteous war if we were so at war within ourselves that we couldn't act for our own higher good? More than any other dilemma, it is this one that now plagues humanity.

Early in the Gita, Krishna basically tells Arjuna that he too is a servant of dharma. In the well known verse from the fourth chapter he states,

When goodness grows weak,  
When evil increases,  
I make myself a body.

In every age I come back  
To deliver the holy,  
To destroy the sin of the sinner,  
To establish righteousness. (49)

This passage brings us to a final consideration: God in His complete freedom

serves the world through this cyclic rebirth in different times and cultures; in each incarnation, He delivers the message in keeping with the customs and attitudes of the place. He communicates in language that is lucid as well as profound. Those of us born into cultures far distant from the battle of Kurukshetra may well think through what it means for our dharma to be born American or Indian or Chinese. The personality and ideals of our homeland can't help but shape our personal dharma; these values can open up some possibilities and rule out others. Thus, it is useful to ask ourselves how the divine image is reflected in our native land. Arjuna was born into a culture where caste identity was lifelong and where the social fabric was intimately woven with spiritual concerns. For a modern American, caste structures are not a reality, though class is; spiritual concerns are filtered through a scientific and technological grid; and material abundance fogs the inner eye. The open-ended question each of us in the modern world must ask is how do we shape our lives in an affluent culture so that we can take in the best of what is here without losing our direction? How do we develop a trust that we can discover the law of our inner nature, when we have destroyed so much of its reflection in outer nature on this planet? Millennia after Arjuna faced his sorrow, the only solution is still to take refuge in a vigilant intelligence, to halt the chariot and dialogue with the Higher Self—and then move forward and fight.



# RAMAKRISHNA AND 'SCIENCE'

DR. M. SIVARAMAKRISHNA

(Continued from the previous issue)

## *Three fundamental postulates of modern thought*

So far we have seen Ramakrishna's analytic powers, his mapping of the Mind, with the implicit attribution of Ultimate Reality to a 'state' beyond both knowledge and ignorance. And once the fallibility of mind as an instrument of perception is recognized, several further parallels between Ramakrishna and patterns of modern empirical thinking become obvious. Only a few are touched upon as emblematic analogies.

There is fundamental identity between Ramakrishna and at least three contemporary patterns: the idea of indeterminacy: that, in lay man's terms, it is impossible to measure things simultaneously 'with more than strictly limited precision'; the idea that the relation between naming and the thing named cannot be easily identified; and, finally, that there are no 'monolithic' or 'monotone values'.<sup>49</sup>

To begin with, the major assumption conceded by many thinkers today: If 'truth' is 'a precise correspondence between our description and what we describe', or 'between our total network of abstractions and deductions and some total understanding of the world',<sup>50</sup> then this kind of truth is non-existent, inconceivable. In effect, the overall picture being indeterminate, all

that we can do is to achieve epistemological self-sufficiency or autonomy only within limited frames. Even this 'limited thresholds' of 'knowledge' are supported by assumptions generated either by the mind of the frame- or pattern-maker and what he assumes, implicitly, as 'logical'. Hence, 'predictions' are purely deterministic, determined by the sequence accepted in a given context as having the logic or quality attributed to it.

To illustrate by citing the example given by Bateson: if a series of numbers is given the semblance of formal ordering by presupposed odds or evens, then only is it possible to predict the next number based on the pattern of the data given. Thus, if a series is 2,4,6,8,10,12, the next number, by assumption implicitly suggested, is 14. The prediction is possible because *first* I as the sequence-maker, suggest this sequence to you; moreover, the challenge of making you complete the series implies the subtle trap, which most people unwittingly accept, that the 'series was incomplete' and as yet lacks order; *second*, the 'facts' suggested to you by the sequence are 'not available to you beyond the end of (the possibly incomplete) sequence that has been given'.<sup>51</sup>

These two result in the idiosyncratic scientific structure of thinking. Faced with the almost endless 'patterns' in nature and the 'patterns of limited threshold' through which we would like to reassure ourselves that the mystery of mind and nature is available to logic and prediction and the resultant certainty, the scientist either *simplifies* or *ignores* facts which do not

<sup>49</sup>. Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1979) p. 53. See also his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York: Chandler, 1972; paperback, Ballantine Books, 1972) for further discussion of the points raised in this essay.

<sup>50</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>. Ibid.



suit the *a priori* premises. This situation is analysed by almost every one today interested in epistemological problems. Michael Polanyi, for instance, discussing what he calls the 'tacit dimension' of human intelligence, (the fact that *we can know more than we tell*), says: all of us claim 'to have made contact with a reality; a reality which, being real, may yet reveal itself to future eyes in an indefinite range of unexpected manifestations.'<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Alan Watts points out rightly that science ignores 'the context of events' and 'in one way [its] repeatable experiments are based on ignore-ance, for they are performed in artificially closed fields.' Though 'by rigorous isolation of the field' the scientist has the possibility of giving us 'more and more detailed knowledge of the way in which fields are, in practice, related to each other,'<sup>53</sup> this possibility is rarely perceived or acted upon.

The resulting situation has been described by Karl Popper through the image of the 'searchlight'. If science can be likened to 'a searchlight scanning a night sky for the planes,' for 'a plane to register, two things are required: it must exist, and it must be where the beam is. The plane must *be* and it must be *there* where the beam is.' The consequential 'restricted nature of the scientific quest,' 'far from lighting up the entire sky, illumines but an area within it.'<sup>54</sup> One can add, too, that it leaves the rest indeterminate and unpredictable.

Ramakrishna's image for this situation (though the frame of reference is admittedly religious) is, significantly enough, concerned with the sky: since our (naked) eye does not

register the stars in the sky during the day, the prediction, he says is hazardous that they are non-existent altogether. Besides this general statement, there is an interesting incident in his life concerned with 'sequence' and 'predictability'. One day Mathur said to the Master:

'God too must abide by his own laws. He has no power to transcend them.' 'What an absurd proposition!' replied Sri Ramakrishna. 'One who has made a law can repeal it at pleasure or make a new law in its place.' 'How can that be?' said Mathur. 'A plant that produces only red flowers cannot produce flowers of any other colour---white, for instance, for such is the law. I should like to see God produce white flowers from a plant bearing only red flowers.' 'That, too, He can easily do,' answered Ramakrishna. 'for everything depends on His will.'<sup>55</sup>

Mathur, naturally, was not convinced. But

The next day, in the temple garden, Sri Ramakrishna came across a China-rose plant with two flowers on the same stalk, one of which was red and the other snow-white. He broke off the branch to show it to Mathur.<sup>56</sup>

In several ways this incident is a reflector of the ideas mentioned above. (We can regard God and nature as 'translatable'). One notices Mathur's idiom: 'law', 'proposition' etc.—all suggesting, that his stance is *exactly* the same as that of the nineteenth century scientist: the laws of nature (and God) should conform to logic, be predictable and, above all, inviolate. If there is a series of red flowers on a stalk, then one stalk can produce only one and that too a red flower. And by asserting that even God cannot 'transcend' his 'law' nor 'repeal' them, Mathur is as it were, being influenced, in contemporary idiom, by *Occam's razor*: 'a preference for the

52. Michael Polanyi, 'The Tacit Dimension', *Self and World: Readings in Philosophy*, James A. Ogilby, ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1973), p. 218.

53. Alan Watts, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

54. Quoted, Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1976), p. 8.

55. *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1971), pp 72-73.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

simplest assumptions that will fit the facts' forgetting that the 'facts are not available beyond a given sequence'<sup>57</sup> or pattern.

It is, therefore, entirely natural that the Master should call this 'an absurd proposition', because any pattern, as the scientist would say today, 'may be changed or broken by addition, by repetition, by anything that will force you to a new perception of it and these changes can never be predicted with absolute certainty because they have not yet happened.'<sup>58</sup> These ideas Ramakrishna would find perfectly viable and he explains them through an arresting image: Almost echoing the words quoted above, he points out: 'there is no end to God', 'no limit' and 'nothing is impossible for Him' and adds an imagistic analogy: 'No matter how high the kites and vultures soar, they can never strike against the ceiling of the sky.'<sup>59</sup>

In Ramakrishna's inexhaustibly suggestive world of metaphors, the vulture is a symbol, on the one hand, of sterile punditry—the tragic dissociation between knowledge and experience—and on the other, as here, it suggests the counterpart of the pundit: the facile scientist believing that by 'fixed laws' and 'permanent propositions' he can perform the rope-trick of reaching the 'vaults' of Ultimate Reality!

'Fixed laws', in fact, raises the related problem of naming the laws or facts. By implication the relation between things and their names is an important area of controversy today. Here too, we find Ramakrishna's intuitions offering significant pointers to resolve the controversy. The 'facts' in this area as analysed by Bateson are two:

1. Basically, there is a distinction—at least an awareness of it—between the naming and the

thing named.. Thus, 'when we think of coconuts or pigs, there are no coconuts or pigs in the brain'. In this sense, the relation between naming and the thing named is only of 'the nature of classification', 'of the assignment of the thing to a class'. Therefore, 'naming is always classifying and mapping is essentially the same as naming.'<sup>60</sup>

2. Since facts in the world of science are not free from value-loaded, emotive contexts, we have the paradox that the disjunction between a thing and its name operates only cerebrally. 'The symbolic and affective hemisphere' of our psyche, negates this distinction when it suits its emotive needs. Identifying both we respond emotively when for instance a name is abused or an effigy or a picture is burnt. In effect, we have two hemispheres of the brain: 'the dominant hemisphere' makes distinction but the other 'affective' one disregards the distinction and identifies both.<sup>61</sup>

In effect, if 'things are units of description', 'it is naming and describing which makes nature seem to consist of separate units.'<sup>62</sup> In Ramakrishna the problem figures as a very crucial one in several contexts with significant patterns of meaning. While his overall *experience* is one of total identity between the word or name (*Bhāgavata*), the perceiver of the word or name (*Bhākta*) and the objective correlative, so to say, of both (*Bhagavān*), for analytic purposes, we may summarize his views in this way:

Ramakrishna knew that the naming is not the thing. His image is the almanac, and the problem, interestingly, is prediction: of rain, in this case. 'The almanac forecasts the rainfall of the year. But not a drop of water will you get by squeezing the almanac. No, not even one drop.'<sup>63</sup> Obviously, the rain in the almanac is no rain at all: there is no rain in the brain; moreover, the name rain is different from the thing itself.

57. Bateson, *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

59. *The Gospel*, p. 920.

60. Bateson, *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

61. *Ibid.*

62. Alan Watts, *Op. cit.*, p. 70.

63. *The Gospel*, p. 476.

Similarly, in a related way, a map is not the territory, or a catalogue the things it names. Ramakrishna's metaphor is a 'letter.' A letter is only a purveyor of information, yet it is necessary for the functioning of the other side of the brain responding to our 'purposes and interests.' In effect, it may be a pointer only of limited threshold but a pointer which initiates further action. Ramakrishna tells all this in a fable:

A man lost a letter. He couldn't remember where he had left it. He began to search for it with a lamp. After two or three people had searched, the letter was at last found. The message in the letter was 'Please send us five seers of sandesh and a piece of wearing cloth.' The man read it and then threw the letter away. There was no further need of it, now all he had to do was to buy the five seers of sandesh and the piece of cloth.<sup>64</sup>

The example is in keeping with Ramakrishna's view of knowledge and ignorance: we need to dispel the ignorance of the contents of the letter by knowledge (scientific knowledge can we say?) but we can throw both ignorance and knowledge away (the typical dual thorns piercing all of us) in the face of the things in themselves. In effect, the letter merely names though in the absence of the naming we may not know what to seek.

But Ramakrishna's dialectic is peculiarly synergetic and is free from preference for the simplistic resolution. He categorically declared once to Bankim Chandra, 'Analogy is one-sided. You are a pundit; haven't you read logic. Suppose you say that a man is as terrible as a tiger. That doesn't mean that he has a fearful tail or a tiger's pot face!'<sup>65</sup> It is, appropriate, therefore, that, in another context, he should draw

attention to the viability and significance of the name in its autonomous existence. Using the framework of a myth he says:

Why, is the *name* a trifling thing? God is not different from His name. Satyabhama tried to balance Krishna with gold and precious stones, but could not do it. Then Rukmini put a tulsi-leaf with the name of Krishna on the scales. That balanced the Lord.<sup>66</sup>

This myth is a dramatization of the scientific and the mystical views of Ultimate Reality. If Kṛṣṇa is whatever is Ultimate Reality or Nature, his wives Satyabhāma and Rukmini are the scientist and the mystic trying to put the mystery of the Reality into their respective patterns or scales. Satyabhāma obviously assumes, as scientists do, that the only viable modes are quantum, mass, weight, shape—even the very act of measuring. Rukmini, like all mystics, is a synergetic mystic with the third eye able to perceive the undifferentiated Divine Ground in which 'in the beginning there was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God.' In effect, naming and the thing named *can* exist in a unitary level on which one can be aware 'of a multitude of distinct things' as only 'a multitude of changing relations'<sup>67</sup>

—before our descent into the Serbonian bog of distinctions and differences begins. If this truth is by-passed, then we have to subject ourselves, as most of us do today, either to the tyranny of the

Shrieking voices

Scolding, mocking or merely chattering,<sup>68</sup>

or the idiocy of gadgetry. In effect, we would come to realize that 'we are not

<sup>64</sup>. Ibid., pp. 475-76.

<sup>65</sup>. Ibid., p. 669.

<sup>66</sup>. Ibid., p. 386.

<sup>67</sup>. Alan Watts, *Op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>68</sup>. T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 19.

here to verify', 'inform curiosity/Or carry report.'<sup>69</sup> Then only things 'balance'.

Finally, the parallel between the idea of monotone 'values' and Ramakrishna. 'A monotone value', says Bateson, 'is one that either only increases or only decreases. Its curve has no kinks; that is, its curve never changes from increases or vice versa.'<sup>70</sup> Such a value does not exist in biology. For instance, 'more calcium is not always better than less calcium.'<sup>71</sup> In effect, an organism needs an 'optimum quantity of this which only makes it a value. Beyond the optimum which is needed even a good thing becomes 'toxic'. 'More of something is' not 'always better than less of the something.' In short, 'enough is better than a feast.'<sup>72</sup> Bateson includes several psychic and biological areas as operative fields of this idea: items of diet, conditions of life, temperature, entertainment, sex and even money.

Ramakrishna's intuitions reflect and endorse the implications which can be inferred from the basic premise of monotone values. The idea that something can become 'toxic' beyond a certain point or for another structure or consciousness is repeatedly expressed by him in the image of the snake and its toxin: the poison in the snake is fatal to others not to itself. In other words, what is toxic depends on perspective rather than any innate quality. This image is Ramakrishna's classic analogy for the existence of 'evil' in a cosmos presided over by a 'benevolent God'. 'Evil', in this sense, counterpoints 'good' and in effect is the very polarity which makes the definition of 'good' itself possible. Moreover, in the world of 'play' or *līlā*, the apparently disordered existence, evil and

good both exist as a simultaneity of opposites, creating a tension necessary for the evolving self.

From this emerges Ramakrishna's concept of the archetypal toxins on the divine path: 'woman and gold'. But, here, as elsewhere his intuitions are from monochrome perspectives. It is true that he always used to exhort his devotees to give up 'woman and gold'. This is, so to say, an invariable, according to him, in any kind of higher life. But he never projected or defined them in a unilateral way.

Basic to the paradox is that in many contexts Ramakrishna's exposition of the nature of religious experience is clothed in erotic imagery. In fact, he made what should seem in any sense of the word an extremely startling statement: 'I have seen with my own eyes that God dwells even in the sexual organ.'<sup>73</sup> He cites, similarly, an intriguing remark: '...when a man attains ecstatic love of God all the pores of the skin, even the roots of the hair, become like so many sexual organs.'<sup>74</sup>

Not only does Ramakrishna use erotic imagery but also interprets the values of woman and gold in a paradoxical way. There is the overall paradox that not only has he worshipped his own wife as the living symbol of his Divine Mother—an event heralding, probably, the arrival of Woman Power as the most significant event of the present century—but also, in many contexts, advises householders to lead a normal 'genetic' life until a certain level of spiritual growth is achieved. In fact, he always used to emphasize that the householder's life has greater advantages for spiritual struggle: 'it is like fighting from a fort. There are many disadvantages in an open field....'<sup>75</sup>

69. Ibid., pp. 50-51.

70. Bateson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. *The Gospel*, p. 260.

74. Ibid., p. 346.

75. Ibid., p. 411.

The paradox can be resolved if we note that for Ramakrishna woman is not a monotone value. In fact many people do not notice the actual word used by Ramakrishna for woman: it is not *nārī* or *strī* (which would be the literal translation of 'woman') but *kāmīnī*. This is a connotatively rich word signifying not woman as such but woman as a seductive agent. If this is kept in view, Ramakrishna is obviously not branding 'woman' as an intrinsically, archetypally seductive siren but pointing out contexts concerned with woman as instinct with *kāma* or lust, an attitude of irrationally 'passionate concern.' Therefore, 'woman and gold' do not in themselves suggest evil. Ramakrishna's views reflect the distinction which psychologists such as Abraham Maslow have drawn between behaviour and the function of the behaviour—though the same emotion may be present in both cases: 'A man', says Ramakrishna, 'has his wife on one side and his daughter on the other. He shows affection to them in different ways.'<sup>76</sup>

In Ramakrishna, 'woman and gold' are thus correlatives of one's erotic and possessive longings (*kāma* and *artha*). But they are also basic psychic energies which wrongly directed become toxic but properly used become powerful modes of liberation. This idea is, interestingly enough, in contrast to the one we discussed earlier: woman and gold as representing the behavioural and physical world. If they are instruments of limited perception, there, here they are primal energies propelling the indwelling Spirit towards Perfection. Ramakrishna used to say: 'God reveals Himself to a devotee who feels drawn to Him by the combined force of these three attractions: the attraction of worldly possessions for the worldly man, the

child's attraction for its mother, and the husband's attraction for the chaste wife.'<sup>77</sup> 'The point is', he elaborates, 'to love God even as the mother loves her child, the chaste wife her husband, and the worldly man his wealth. Add together these three forces of love, these three powers of attraction, and give it all to God'.<sup>78</sup>

In this regard Ramakrishna anticipates many of our contemporary patterns of thinking concerned with a more balanced understanding of the erotic impulse vis-à-vis the religious consciousness. Colin Wilson, for instance, discussing what he calls 'ladder of selves' (Ramakrishna's 'mind-constructs' is a reflector of this idea), points out that 'meaning' (i.e., perception of significance, or, 'a peak experience') 'can draw us up the ladder and when this happens we feel revitalized and reenergised. Sex provides an obvious example.' The addict 'believes it is the sex he is interested in; in fact it is... the momentary glimpse of a less mediocre self. But since he fails to grasp the meaning-content of the insight, he continually falls back to the lower-level ...When the meaning-content is grasped [sex] can be used to tap vital energy reserves.'<sup>79</sup> The same energy, he adds categorically, can be used 'for bending spoons or deflecting compass needles. The nature of this energy is still not understood but of its existence there can be no doubt.'<sup>80</sup>

Obviously, these powers beyond an optimal limit are toxins. But used properly not only do they become neutralized but also act as 'aids' or 'channelizing currents' for attaining the 'metapattern'. Even in regard to money—excess of which hardly

77. Ibid., p. 83.

78. Ibid.

79. Colin Wilson, *Mysteries* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978), p. 44.

80. Ibid., p. 85.

76. Ibid.

any one would consider toxic—Ramakrishna is firm and explicit. This highpriest of total renunciation of money would scold, in some contexts, the wastage of an extra match stick! He always emphasized that 'a householder, of course, needs money, for he has a wife and children. He should save up to feed them. They say that the bird and the sannyasi should not provide for the future. But the mother bird brings food in her mouth for her chicks; so she too provides. A householder needs money. He has to support his family.'<sup>81</sup> These are indeed strange words if we remember that they were spoken by one whose body would get crippled and cramped with pain with even the slightest touch of a coin! But when it came to monks he would therefore recommend the exact opposite: total renunciation of money. In short, what Bateson says in regard to money as 'a monotone value' would find total, unambiguous confirmation in Ramakrishna:

What is desirable is a relationship with a certain optimum of conflict. It is even possible that when we consider money, not by itself, but as acting on human beings who own it, we may find that money, too, becomes toxic beyond a certain point. In any case, the philosophy of money, the set of presuppositions by which money is supposedly better and better the more you have of it, is totally antibiological.<sup>82</sup>

No wonder that Ramakrishna calls the toxic effects of woman and gold induced by attachment beyond the optimal limit (determined by the orientations of *dharma* and *mokṣa*) as a definite disease: the disease of worldliness!

### *The existential approach*

Every exercise in any structuring of thought should, according to Hindu philosophy, end on what is called *phalaśruti*: the hearing of the tangible gain

we get out of this endeavour. Even in this essay, one can, on a lower key, raise this issue: what is the gain of this kind of discussion? For the confirmed devotee of Ramakrishna, this is hardly necessary as a feather in the Master's cap. As for Ramakrishna himself! Well, we can only guess:

'We have lost Shiva', says Bateson, 'the Dancer of Hinduism whose dance at the trivial level is both creation and destruction but in whole is beauty. We have lost Abraxas, the terrible and beautiful God of both day and night in Gnosticism. We have lost totemism, the sense of parallelism between man's organization and that of the animals and plants. We have lost even the Dying God.'<sup>83</sup>

The point of the discussion is that we haven't lost what Bateson says we did. For, Ramakrishna experienced and expounded, for us, in our time, this parallelism this dance of Śiva—the Dance of the Wuli Masters<sup>84</sup>—which is a reaffirmation of the value of all that is. He illumines what Fritjof Capra has called one of the most startling features of the 'new' (only apparently 'new') reality emerging unmistakably today: 'the unification of concepts which had hitherto seemed opposite and irreconcilable.'<sup>85</sup> One should only add, Ramakrishna's forte is not conceptual but experiential and therein lies the uniqueness of the relation between Ramakrishna and 'science'. Perception of this uniqueness, however tangential, is our tangible gain.

(Concluded)

<sup>83</sup>. Ibid., pp. 17-18.

<sup>84</sup>. See Gary Zukav for an interesting study of this idea in *The Dance of the Wuli Masters* (London: Rider/Hutchinson, 1979; Flamingo Paperback, Fontana, 1983), pp. 33-34.

<sup>85</sup>. Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (New Revised edition), (London: Fontana/Collins, 1983), p. 161.

<sup>81</sup>. *The Gospel*, p. 670.

<sup>82</sup>. Bateson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 53-55.

## PRACTICAL VEDANTA IN THE ARTS

SWAMI YOGESHANANDA

Some of us are under the impression that religion is a spare-time affair. 'If I get time, I'll.. .' is the phrase with which we begin many of our best resolutions. 'If I get home early enough this evening, I'll have time to meditate a little before dinner.' 'I'm going to get myself out of bed earlier in the morning, if I can, so I can do meditation or japa before going to work every day.' 'I'll be at the service on Sunday (or the class on Tuesday) if I can arrange my schedule for the week. I hope something doesn't come up.. '

Personally I have told myself all these things at one time or another, and lived to see my own mind cook up, sometimes in very roundabout ways, circumstances that prevent the execution of my promises. When we do this we only deprive ourselves and very often take it out on ourselves in the form of negativity or feelings of guilt and hopelessness. We begin to think we may never be able to take spiritual life seriously.

Vedanta, at least as taught in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement, is *lived* religion; this is exactly what it means. There are no lukewarm Vedantists; either you are practising or you are not. The question is how to do it. In the suggestions which follow, the message is that we need to discover spiritual practice as virtually a twenty-four-hour concern. We need not wait until we 'get home'; or until we are too tired to meditate; or until the lunch-break or for the stall in freeway traffic. Our spiritual practice goes on from the moment we wake, throughout the day and even on into our dreamlife at night. When we wake to this fact it is a welcome sign that our 'honeymoon' with the lure spiritual experience is over!

The following remarks are offered not as

preachments on what Vedantists ought to do, so much as suggestions which have been tried by others in the past, are being tried in the present, and may be found helpful.

*The whole range of creative talent being included here—crafts, acting, writing.*

Let me first set out the scripture verse which sums up the approach taken in this paper. 'Whatever in this world is powerful, beautiful or glorious, that you may know to have come from a fraction of My power and glory'—Sri Krishna in the tenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Our Vedanta is not a life-negating religion. We are clearly to worship the Lord in all human activity, as Swami Vivekananda has made plain. It is implicit too in his definition of idolatry: 'When you think that the image is God that is right and that is worship, but if you think that God is the image, that is idolatry.' When we say 'To the cobbler there's nothing like leather', what we really mean is not that he has made leather his God but that for him it is in leather that the Creative Principle, the Divine Power, yields up her secrets. Actually we are all artists, albeit unconsciously! 'Upon Him the senses are painting chairs and tables, rooms, worlds and moons and suns and everything else.'

If we turn to the words of Sri Ramakrishna, this is what we find: 'If a person excels in music, painting or dancing, that person can quickly realize God, provided he strives sincerely.' Why should that be so, we may ask. Because such persons inevitably become involved with concentration, development of the imagination and constant, patient practice.

The Master's own talents are well-known:



he was a gifted singer, sensitive to the slightest deviation from pitch and tempo; his dancing was spontaneous, spell-binding and infused with spiritual ecstasy; he showed natural skill in painting and sculpture. At the end of his life, after meeting Girish Chandra Ghosh, he became attracted to the theatre as a medium of spiritual expression and was himself adopted by the actors of Bengal as their patron-saint.

Narendranath as an amateur singer and player was in high demand in Calcutta society before he renounced the world. In later years he said of music, underlining the importance of the *ear* as a primary implement of *sādhana*, 'Music is the highest art and for those who understand, it is the highest worship.' 'Music has such tremendous power over the human mind; it brings it to concentration in a moment. You will find, even the minds of animals such as dogs, lions, cats and serpents become charmed with music.' Even better known are the Swami's gifts in public oratory and in *belle lettres*. He was eager to attempt to learn to sketch. I should like to remind you of a few of his pronouncements on art:

The secret of Greek art is its imitation of nature even to the minutest detail; whereas the secret of Indian art is to represent the ideal. The Indian tendency...has become degraded into painting grotesque images. Now true Art can be compared to a lily which springs from the ground, takes its nourishment from the ground, is in touch with the ground, and yet is quite high above it. So Art must be in touch with nature—and wherever that touch is gone, Art degenerates—yet it must be above nature. Art is representing the beautiful. There must be art in everything. The artistic faculty was highly developed in our Lord, Sri Ramakrishna, and he used to say that without this faculty none can be truly spiritual.

In art, interest must be centred in the principal theme. Drama is the most difficult of all arts. In it, two things are to be satisfied—first, the ears, and second, the eyes. To paint

a scene, if one thing be painted, it is easy enough; but to paint different things and yet keep up the central interest is very difficult. Another difficult art is stage-management, that is, combining different things in such a manner as to keep the central interest intact.

Feeling is the soul, the secret of everything. There is more music in common people's songs, and they should be collected together.

With all this as background let us raise some questions which are bound to come up whenever spiritual aspirants seriously engage themselves in a pursuit of the creative arts.

*How do we 'spiritualize' our professional or amateur creative talents?*

We do this in three ways: by content, by attitude and by context. The first means that instead of taking as subject for our art that which remains earthy, which carries both creator and observer along a limited arc only, scarcely lifting the mind beyond the ordinary and mundane, we fix our efforts on portraying hints of the eternal and infinite. We can choose to paint more inspiring persons, compose and play more sublime sounds, write on nobler themes or model in clay objects more suggestive of divinity. I have known, for example, two monks of our Order who after joining their monasteries, one a commercial artist and the other an amateur painter, turned their attention to portraits of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and the Disciples—with excellent result valued by all of us.

The second, attitude, refers to the way in which we go about our art: how much do we have our *little selves* in our thought and planning, during the execution or performance? An aspirant, who, while writing a book—even the best book—constantly anticipates what its publication will mean in terms of personal fame, glory or financial return, is not a very apt



Vedantist! Some of us think we do not have such ideas, only to discover that we do secretly harbour them. Some approach an act of creative expression thinking, 'Now I am about to show what I can do. People will appreciate this....I am about to give birth to something very precious within me which is struggling to get out, and its production will make me feel fulfilled. It will be a unique creation, never seen or heard before, an expression of the *real me*—and it will make people sit up and take notice!'

The Vedanta aspirant will be more concerned to be conscious of the universal *śakti* rising in him or her, the power of the Divine Mother who gives birth to all things and through whose will all takes the shape it does. It is a devotional attitude. The artist is to know that without that power and instigation nothing will turn out. He begins his work prayerfully, executes his act of art conscious of the divine power enabling him, and ends the production by offering it back to That from which he knows it came. He leaves at the feet of God all praise and blame, failure or success, recognition or neglect. Art for Art's sake? Yes—if you understand that art as worship. It is exactly the same as for the homemaker, understanding that she uses the divine energy of the universe in cooking her dish with skill and serving it with artistry, offering it as oblation to the Lord in the consumer, her family, who are also able to receive and enjoy it by means of that same energy.

By context is meant the avenue of appreciation or utilization. Many talented aspirants have found that by placing their art in a special context, which can perhaps be termed spiritual—sculpting an image for the Society, translating or editing literature, painting holy personages or scenes, making music for public services, cooking for the congregation, repairing broken equipment

—they somehow ennoble their art or skill and even expand and enhance their own gift in ways unexpected. This can bring a feeling of much benefit. As one of my teachers used to say, 'The dedication of our talents to the Lord's work is ennobling and purifying to both body and mind.'

All three ways are of help in integrating our lives. We may be good meditators, our spiritual life humming along in the interior dimension, yet we are not able to harmonize all that with the old ideas, habits and associations which keep cropping up in our creative activity. All this has to be brought together and integrated. And that is where a guru and the 'company of the holy' enter in. These are a great help to us. Some artistic persons have the notion that if they associate with 'religious' people and forsake the cliques of the 'arty', their art will suffer thereby; it has not been proven to be true.

*Will the exercise of our creative talent distract us from spiritual endeavours?*

It may surprise you that this could be a worry to anyone! Indeed, the problem has a philosophical basis, and it comes up at a certain stage in spiritual life. Vedanta says that in a sense his created world is a corruption of the Spirit; that when Brahma felt the need to 'create' or project Itself, this was already a regeneration and that we only further involve ourselves in *maya* when we follow *pravṛtti*: the externalizing of bodily and mental energies. This negative conclusion can be turned around. First, it need not arise until we are deeply involved in spiritual practice, as for example in beginning monastic life, where sometimes the candidate does have to turn his back, at least for a time, on talents previously exercised. For the householder practical Vedanta consists in changing the direction of our creativity in the ways just mentioned.

In the case, for example, of actors, Sri Ramakrishna attended plays staged by Girish Ghosh and was put into samadhi. 'I found,' he said, 'that the representation was the same as the real.' That is, with such skill and identification were those plays written and acted that he felt he was seeing Buddha, seeing Chaitanya, before his eyes. To recreate history in that way is not at all easy; it means a suspension of 'time' in the consciousness of the artists and a relating of oneself to the Eternal. The greater this ability the more compelling will be the enactment. So with all art. There cannot be much conflict between creativity and spiritual practice if the former is deliberately undertaken as one form of the latter—as worship itself.

All of us, artists or not, do something of this when we practice seeing behind the images or photographs the presence of the aspect of God represented on shrine or altar, and when in singing songs of devotion we attempt to present them as offering to a living Lord, visualized right in front of us, as the Master told us to do.

### *The problem of name and fame*

A greater tension comes for Vedantists in the arts when the 'natural' yen for appreciation of our work, in the form of acceptance, praise and remuneration, often considered vital to the artist's motivation or inspiration, runs afoul of the spiritual counsel to pay no heed to these. Like all counsels of perfection this one can be fully practised only by the realized soul. Still, that state of unconcern or non-attachment is our goal and ideal and, without practising it, we will never reach it. Girish, under the influence of the Master's all-renouncing ideals, was inclined to give up his play-writing and staging, and one day spoke of brushing all that aside. 'No, no!' Sri Ramakrishna exclaimed, 'Through this

activity people will learn much from you. Don't give it up.'

Start by telling yourself, 'I am not seeking such returns as praise, reward or even acceptance in the work I am about to do. (Of course if it comes, I won't mind!).' That's a good beginning. The test will be when the opposite comes, how much you react and resent. Through practice and understanding we come to view our creativity as being of little credit to us personally, stemming as it does from the Fount of all creation and executed by virtue of that same Power.

We have to discriminate constantly when roses or thorns land in our lap: Whose are these? Are they mine? Dare I call that work mine? How was it produced? Can I say? Or have I not simply put a label on it without justification. Then offer back to God the results of the endeavour.

In the ancient Indian practice of art the artist or artisan did not place his name upon the product, did not draw attention to himself, the mere instrument. We do not know the composers of the Vedic hymns, the inspired geniuses of the first iconography, makers of the immortal monuments. How different from the prima-donna mentality of the art world today! Let us try to regain that sense of being so completely one with the whole process of creation that we subtract from ourselves no segment of it, and say with Kahlil Gibran,

Beauty is life when life unveils her holy face.  
But you are life and you are the veil  
Beauty is eternity gazing at itself in a mirror,  
But you are eternity and you are the mirror

*Isn't Self-realization also self-fulfilment?*

Indeed it is. The trouble is, some of us, having too limited a notion of ourselves, imagine that the expression of our own little personalities, our relative self, must

play a large role in that 'self-fulfilment'. Vedanta is talking, of course, about the realization of our divinity—of ourselves as Spirit. After the transformation of the ego in the fire of yoga and after the experience of the Atman, our true Self, the divinity realized there finds its expression through what Sri Ramakrishna calls 'the ripe ego'. This is a far cry from the type of creative activity taught in popular schools of self-discovery, self-improvement or self-expression. True individuality, Swami Vivekananda often reminds us, is to be found only in the Universal, in the apprehension of our universal, transcendent Selfhood; all other 'selves' being merely provisional.

There is another group of aspirants who form an ideal image of selfhood, wonderfully above and beyond their present little egos, and then strive desperately to model themselves into copies of that towering personality—an Avatar, a saint, a guru.. For them is the fine little tale of one of the Hassidic Fathers. The Baal Shem Tov was the patriarch and archetype to all of them. And this Father Zusya attempted to bend his whole life into the shape and mould of that great soul's. As he at last lay dying, embittered by self-defeat, a sapient Father said to him, 'Look: when you get up to heaven they will not ask you "Why were you not the Baal Shem Tov?" They will ask you, "Why were you not Father Zusya?"' Self-realization is indeed the discovery of our true individuality, for that is our universality; it alone is self-fulfilment.

### *The odour of eccentricity*

Non-artists (if there be any) are inclined to point the accusing finger at creative genius for the idiosyncrasy it often seems to require and sometimes flaunts. They ask, not without justification, how this

eccentricity can be compatible with spiritual attainment. There does seem to be a proverbial aversion to discipline in other dimensions of their lives, seen in persons who have obviously undergone great discipline in special areas. But in place of those whose peculiarities scandalize, let me place the name, for example, of performer and composer Pablo Casals—a superb artist and human being. This genius is of the opinion that there is no *necessary* connection between eccentricity and creative talent, and that to assume that the talented must be at least partly psychotic is a stereotype and fictional tad. This aspect of the artist is glorified by the press and often made to loom larger in the image of famous people than it actually does. Here is a practical rule used even by Einstein. wait until you are seventy before you cut loose!

As Vedantists we will do well to remember the value of ensemble work. Musicians who have played in orchestra or band or sung in choir or chorus know that the discipline and cooperation involved train the individual to tone down eccentricity and flair for the sake of a corporate effect. It is good for highly individualistic people in any field to undertake such exercises periodically. One of the Swamis I knew remarked that of the many things he had observed about Sri Ramakrishna's great disciples was the thread of *common sense* which ran through them all, different as they were. And once when I asked my teacher about the moods in which I felt like just doing something bizarre, he warned me: 'Don't be crazy.' It will not help us spiritually.

This is not a pitch for being prosaic, conventional or mediocre. Another abbot of mine remarked about all of us in the Society, 'You are not here because you are just ordinary people.' It is certainly necessary that the creative mood be

acknowledged, kept alive and followed, even indulged—but it has to be *guided* so as not to injure ourselves and others.

### *Yoga and Art*

Finally a word about the fact that our Vedantic practice of yoga must surely help to engender the kind of non-attachment essential for artists—and particularly performers. Casals tells us of an incident in which he nearly lost his life. Climbing with friends down a slope on Mt Tamalpais in California they noticed a large boulder had been dislodged behind them and was falling from above. Casals got his head out of the way in the nick of time but the boulder struck his left hand, smashing his fingers—a cellist's *sine qua non*. While his friends were aghast, he himself had a different reaction altogether. Looking at the mashed and bleeding hand he thought,

'Thank God, I'll never have to play the cello again'. This astonishing degree of non-identification is commented on by Casals in this way: 'Dedication to one's art does involve a kind of enslavement and then too, of course, I have always felt such dreadful anxiety before performance.' Creativity in itself evidently does not save us from maya's grip, but it also need not engulf us further in it. The fully developed artist had best be a yogi (and often is) and, as Casals adds, he or she must have a full understanding of life.

Honour the divine within yourself by manifesting those powers with awareness and non-attachment. Personally I am convinced that in the arts we are on the threshold of a Golden Age, which, when the full impact of the East reaches the artists of the West, will be like nothing seen in the world before

### *They Lived with God*

## UPENDRA NATH MUKHOPADHYAY

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

According to the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, four kinds of people worship God: those who are afflicted, those who seek knowledge, those who crave wealth, and those endowed with wisdom. All four kinds are worthy because their actions and thoughts are in some way connected with God, even though some of them seek worldly prosperity. No doubt God is the Kalpataru (wish-fulfilling tree), but this does not mean that He automatically fulfils all desires. As the wise doctor will not prescribe poison to alleviate a patient's pain, similarly the

omniscient God answers only those prayers which will ultimately benefit the devotee.

Once a poor but beautiful woman fell in love with a man for his money. However, after she married him and found herself the recipient of all his wealth, the object of her love gradually shifted from money to husband. She realized that any joy in life comes from the Spirit, not from matter. This is exactly what happened in the life of Upendra Nath Mukhopadhyay. He went to Sri Ramakrishna seeking wealth and material prosperity.

In *Sri Ramakrishna and His Disciples*, Sister Devamata quoted Swami Ramakrishnananda referring to Upendra: 'At one time there was a very poor boy who used to come almost daily to Sri Ramakrishna, but the Master would never take any of the food he brought. We did not know why. Finally one day Sri Ramakrishna said: "This poor fellow comes here because he has a great desire to be rich. Very well, let me taste a little of what he has brought;" and he took a small quantity of the food. The boy's condition began to improve immediately, and today he is one of the most prosperous men in Calcutta.'

Upendra Nath Mukhopadhyay was born in Ahiritola, West Calcutta, at the home of his maternal uncle on February 28, 1868. He lived there with his mother, even though his parental home was at Balagar, Houghly. Very little is known about his father, Purna Chandra Mukhopadhyay, except that he was a high-class brahmin and had been married several times. Upendra's uncle, Jagabandhu Bandyopadhyay, worked in a watch shop at Radhabazar, and his financial condition was not good. Having no children himself, Jagabandhu brought up his nephew as his own son.

Upendra went to primary school for a time but then discontinued his studies. His uncle scolded him for this and advised him to find a job. Though Upendra was only a boy, within a few days he found a job in a drugstore washing bottles and labelling them. Later, when he realized that the pharmacist was not an honest man, he quit his job and found another in a bookshop at Brindaban Basak, Battala (Upper Chitpore Road). Upendra's monthly salary was five rupees (about 50 cents), and his duties included cleaning the shop, arranging bookshelves, and selling books.

After some time the owner wanted to sell

the business for seventy-five rupees. Upendra decided to buy it and asked his uncle for the money. Jagabandhu refused, but his aunt secretly gave him the money. Upendra bought the shop and reimbursed his aunt within three months.

As owner of the bookstore, Upendra collected some small comic books and successfully published them in one volume. After some time he became an agent for other publishers as well as the sole distributor of the works of Surendra Nath Majumdar, the brother of Devendra Nath Majumdar, who was a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. Upendra lived on the same street as Devendra, so they were acquainted with each other. Adhar Lal Sen also lived in Ahiritola, and Sri Ramakrishna visited his house several times.

In 1884, probably at Adhar's house, Upendra first met Sri Ramakrishna and began to visit Dakshineswar regularly. Observing some auspicious signs in Upendra, the Master inquired about his background. When Upendra stated his name Sri Ramakrishna said: 'Oh, you are a brahmin! Is there any regular worship at your house?' 'Yes, Sir. There is daily worship of Nārāyaṇa [Lord Krishna] in our house.' Then the Master asked, 'Some day could you bring me some prasād [sanctified food] of Lord Nārāyaṇa?' Upendra agreed.

Returning home he wondered whether or not his aunt would misunderstand the Master. After long deliberation he finally told her that a brahmin of the Dakshineswar Kali Temple had asked for some of Nārāyaṇa's prasād. Hearing this the devout woman immediately agreed to send prasād to Dakshineswar through her nephew. That day Narendra, Rakhal, and some young devotees were taking their meal at Dakshineswar. When Upendra arrived, he offered the prasād to Sri Ramakrishna, who was very pleased. The Master

took a little and asked Upendra to distribute the rest among the others.

Some of Upendra's young friends began to visit Dakshineswar with him. This irritated their parents, who complained to his uncle. As a result Jagabandhu grounded Upendra, confining him to the house. But Upendra's compassionate aunt released him. On another day she, being an excellent cook, sent prasad to Dakshineswar on her own.

Upendra was upset because he could not afford to bring the Master a gift as other devotees did. Understanding the cause of his grief, Sri Ramakrishna asked him to buy two pices worth of *jilipis* (a kind of sweet). Much later, when Upendra celebrated the Ramakrishna festival at his house, he would always offer the Master *jilipis*.

Gradually Upendra became known among the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and attended festivals arranged for the Master in their Calcutta homes. On April 6, 1885, Sri Ramakrishna visited Devendra's house, where Upendra had the great privilege of massaging the Master's feet. When Surendra, Ram, and other devotees started to celebrate the birthday of the Master at Dakshineswar, Upendra also took an active part.

Upendra was a handsome young man with a fair complexion, bright eyes, and beautiful curly hair. He was also industrious and ambitious, and the pain of poverty tormented him. Upendra had no desire to marry, but Sri Ramakrishna knew a couple who had a dark-complexioned daughter named Habi. The Master did not like her name and suggested to her parents that they call her Bhavatarini, which is also the name of the Dakshineswar Kali. From that time on she was known as Bhavatarini.

Once when Upendra's mother was visiting the Master at Dakshineswar, Sri

Ramakrishna suggested that she arrange her son's marriage to Bhavatarini. She agreed. Swami Vivekananda, who was present at the time, objected to the marriage proposal, saying that the girl was not pretty and her skin was too dark. But the Master remarked that the girl had some good signs and that this marriage would bring good fortune to Upendra. In 1885 Upendra married her with the consent of the Master. Later, when Swamiji visited the couple, Bhavatarini was reluctant to offer refreshments to him, knowing his objections to the marriage. But Swamiji mollified her and said humourously: 'Since you have wrapped yourself around Upendra's neck, I will have to eat your cooking.'

Upendra's uncle would sometimes remind him that he had neither education nor money, so his life was worthless. It was hard for this sincere teenager to digest such humiliation day after day. He first tried to help himself and then sought divine grace from Sri Ramakrishna.

One day at Dakshineswar Upendra was seated with other devotees near the Master. Pointing to him, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'This boy visits this place desiring money.' On another occasion in a gathering, a devotee said to the Master, 'Sir, you did not bless Upendra.' Sri Ramakrishna replied with a smile: 'He did not express to me what he wants. But I know his wish—that his small door should be big—and it will be.'

On January 1, 1886, at Cossipore, Sri Ramakrishna became a wish-fulfilling tree and blessed many devotees. That day he asked Upendra, 'What do you want?' 'Money'. 'You will get plenty of money', said the Master. It would be an injustice to Upendra, however, if the reader thought that he was only money-hungry. His life indicates that he had true devotion for the

Master along with the ambition to acquire wealth.

Sri Ramakrishna passed away on August 16, 1886, and his body was cremated at the Cossipore cremation grounds. Upendra was present. After extinguishing the funeral fire the devotees bathed in the Ganga. However, when Upendra went to bathe he was bitten by a poisonous snake. Immediately he sat down on dry land while the devotees tied his upper leg tightly so that the poison would not spread, and then they cauterized the wound. By the grace of the Master his life was saved. It took nearly five months for the wound to heal, but the blue mark on his skin remained throughout the rest of his life.

When Upendra started his book business there were no notable Bengali publishers in Calcutta. Battala, in West Calcutta, was just a local book market. Gradually Upendra bought a small printing press and founded the Bengali magazine *Jñānāṅkur* ('The Blossom of Knowledge'). Swami Vivekananda's translation of *The Imitation of Christ* was published serially in this magazine. Later Upendra published the book *Rajbhusha* (*King's Language*), which outlined an easy way to learn the English language. This book sold so well that Upendra amassed a tremendous fortune from it.

Later, in 1889, he published *Sāhitya Kalpadruma*, a monthly magazine. He renamed it *Sāhitya* in 1891 and transferred the entire rights to Suresh Samajpati. In this same year a son was born, Satish Chandra, who later successfully took over his father's business.

Gradually Upendra became well established in the publishing profession. He rented a two-storeyed building and expanded his work in 1896 by publishing the *Basumati*, a weekly Bengali newspaper.

When Swami Vivekananda returned to

Calcutta from the West in February, 1897, the official reception committee sent nothing more than a news release about his arrival to the Calcutta newspapers. But Upendra freely donated much more publicity. Among other things he printed thousands of handbills and distributed them throughout the city. He also placed, in prominent locations, placards announcing Swamiji's arrival time and the reception site. Furthermore, Upendra published a decorative picture of Swami Vivekananda in his newspaper. Below the picture he printed a new song written by Girish Chandra Ghosh in honour of Swamiji's return. Upendra distributed thousands of free copies of this special issue.

The evening before Swamiji's arrival, Swamis Brahmananda and Yogananda, Girish, Purna, and other devotees were discussing the arrangements. The train was scheduled to arrive at Sealdah Station from Budge Budge port early in the morning, and they were concerned whether many people would attend the reception on such a cold morning. When Upendra arrived and heard of their anxiety he assured them: 'Tomorrow thousands of people will go to see Swamiji. I posted placards all over Calcutta, Baranagore, Cossipore, Bhawanipur, and Alipur, and freely distributed fifty thousand handbills and ten thousand copies of the *Basumati*. I strongly believe that tomorrow before daybreak, by the grace of the Master, the Sealdah Station will be overflowing.' Girish was overjoyed and exclaimed, 'Brother, you have performed a great service through this publicity.' Upendra's forecast was accurate. Twenty thousand people came to receive Swamiji at Sealdah Station, creating a sensation all over Calcutta.

Very soon Upendra became a successful publisher in Calcutta. He moved his business to a more commodious building on Gray Street, and expanded production



by enlarging his press. The number of subscribers to the *Basumati* increased enormously, and some notable writers such as Panchkari Bandyopadhyay, Jaladhar Sen, and Suresh Samajpati became its editors. The Basumati Sahitya Mandir, Upendra's publication department, published cheap editions of the Mahabharata of Kaliprasanna Sinha as well as the works of such esteemed writers as Madhusudan, Bankim Chandra, Tekchand, Girish Chandra, Rangalal, Dinabandhu, Hemchandra, Navin Chandra, and Sharat Chandra. It was Upendra who made this great Bengali literature widely available. Moreover, he published the Bengali translation of many Sanskrit scriptures and other literature such as the Mimamsa, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta philosophies, the Upaniṣads, the Bhāgavata, and the works of Śaṅkarācārya, Kālidāsa, and many others.

The Basumati publication house was a temple of learning. When in 1914, during the First World War, subscribers were anxious to receive the latest news, Upendra started publishing an evening edition called the *Daily Basumati*. It was very popular and later became a regular daily Bengali newspaper.

It is a fact that for most people the desire for money takes one's mind away from God. But this was not true in Upendra's case. The more wealth he acquired, the more his devotion to the Master increased. His magazine spread the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji chose 'Namo Nārāyaṇāya' (Salutations to God) as the permanent caption for the front page of the *Basumati*, and Upendra gladly agreed. Once Swamiji remarked, 'Upendra has a wonderful business sense.' Upendra, in turn, often consulted Swamis Vivekananda and Yogananda on business matters.

Every November in his Ahiritola house

Upendra observed the Ramakrishna festival for a day, and he would arrange kirtan and a grand feast. He would decorate the picture of the Master with flowers and garlands, and many monks would participate in the festivities.

Upendra, always eager to serve the monks and the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, kept his place of work open to them. In fact, his workers often referred to the Basumati Sahitya Mandir as *Ramakrishna Sadāvrata* ('Sri Ramakrishna's Inn'). Swami Akhandananda wrote in his memoirs that whenever he and his brother monks visited Upendra's bookshop, he would feed them with various kinds of sweets and other delicacies. Then he would send them by share-carriage back to the Baranagore monastery.

Swami Adbhutananda stayed for some time at Upendra's Basumati press and found everything provided for him. At one time Upendra even sent him by boat to Puri for a pilgrimage. When, after his return from the West in 1900, Swami Vivekananda heard from Swami Adbhutananda that Upendra had graciously provided food and shelter for him for some time, Swamiji, touched by Upendra's generosity, prayed to Sri Ramakrishna, 'Master, please bless Upendra.'

Because Upendra had experienced crippling poverty, he had tremendous love and compassion for the poor. He used to help his workers whenever they were in need of financial assistance. Once two young boys from a reformatory were sent by the government to the Basumati Publishing House for training. One of them stole some books and was caught by the police. The kindhearted Upendra went to court and informed the judge that he had given the books to the boy. Hearing this, the judge released him.

On another occasion Upendra arrived at his office and found a young worker encircled by others. He was told that the



young man had stolen some type and that the police were there to arrest him. But Upendra told the police he had given the type to the young man. After the police left Upendra said to the youth, 'My boy, go away immediately and never commit such a heinous act again.' Though it may seem that Upendra deviated from the truth, the scriptures say, 'One may tell a lie in order to save another's life.'

There are countless stories about Upendra's generosity. Once the paper merchant who supplied the paper for Upendra's press sent a reminder to him that a large invoice had not been paid. Upendra immediately informed the merchant that he had already paid the paper company's representative. A high official of the company came to the Basumati offices to check their account book and discovered that Upendra was right—the bill collector had misappropriated the money. Upendra, knowing that the collector had now and then visited Sri Ramakrishna, stepped forward to assume entire responsibility for the money and requested the official not to take any action against the collector.

One day on his way to the press, Upendra was stopped by a man who needed financial help for his daughter's marriage. Upendra promised to pay him the entire income of that particular day and asked him to come to his Basumati office in the evening. At the end of the day he kept his promise and paid the man three hundred rupees.

Upendra was a self-made man. He earned money by the sweat of his brow and encouraged others to earn money honestly. Tarapada Halder, a staff worker, recorded his memoirs in Upendra's Centenary Number: 'Upen Babu used to put on a dhoti and a loose fitting shirt, over which he wore a black silk coat. He would carry a silver stick in his hand, and I don't remember whether or not I ever saw him without a Burmese cigar in his

mouth. Upendranath had a sweet relationship with his workers. It was not an employer-employee relationship; it was a father-son relationship...He was a true disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. In every step of the prosperous journey of the *Basumati* Upendra saluted Narayana and sought the blessings of the Master. Sri Ramakrishna was the presiding deity of the Basumati Sahitya Mandir. Upendra did not show his devotion publicly, so we never saw him salute the Master, but he practised his spiritual life beyond the gaze of others.'

Gradually Upendra realized that his Gray Street office was insufficient, so he bought a new building and adjacent land on Bow Bazar Street (now Bepin Behari Ganguli Street), in central Calcutta. Because he did not have sufficient funds at the time to buy the property, he had to borrow the money. But by the grace of the Master, he soon paid off the loan.

Upendra was a jolly, loving soul. At the same time he was honest and spiritual. Although he had no formal education, he was known and respected by the great writers and thinkers of Bengal. He had tremendous love and respect for writers and scholars, and it would pain him whenever he found the talent of a writer stifled from lack of money.

Upendra's son, Satish, had the same principles as his father, and achieved similar success. He also imbibed from Upendra a deep love for God. Once he went to Belur Math and asked to become a monk, but the swamis reasoned with him and sent him back home to take care of his father's business.

Upendra believed wholeheartedly that his success was due to the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna. He knew that the beloved Master would guide him in the right direction and protect him from worldly attachment. Throughout his life Upendra

experienced his guru's grace, which made Monday, March 31, 1919, in his uncle's home truly wealthy. He passed away on Monday, March 31, 1919, in his uncle's home in Ahiritola, Calcutta.

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

### *The First National Integration Award of India to Swami Ranganathananda of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*

On 31 October 1986 the First National Integration Award, instituted in the name of the late prime minister Smt Indira Gandhi, was offered to Swami Ranganathananda of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. It was quite an experience to see that the award was being given not to a politician, or a diplomat, or a social worker or even to a so-called nationalist, but to a monk. In a function organized at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, and presided over by the prime minister Sri Rajiv Gandhi, the 79-year-old monk, austere dressed in ochre clothes, delivered an inspiring acceptance speech listened to by the social and intellectual elite of India, cabinet ministers, governors of several states and foreign dignitaries. It was the voice of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda that was heard through the torrent of his powerful words on this occasion. The central message of his speech was respect for the essential divinity of man, sacredness of all service and the basic unity of all religions as preached and practised by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. These are the three foundations on which not only national but even international integration could be achieved in the days to come, said the Swami.

National integration, said Swami Vivekananda nearly a century ago, should be a gathering up of the scattered spiritual forces of India. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda through their unprecedented spiritual *sādhana*s had integrated the essence of the Islamic, Christian and various types of Hindu *sādhana*s in their

own lives. Religion is not in observing this ritual or following that book, but manifesting our own essential divinity within. This is the ancient message of India. In modern times this same message has been triumphantly reestablished through the historic lives and teachings of these twin masters. Reverence for the undying divinity in all human beings, irrespective of caste, creed and nationality, was the key message of these great masters. Nothing was secular with them and all work was only worship in various ways.

For the last fifty years Swami Ranganathananda has been preaching these very ideas in India and abroad. This is his passion, a passion directly inspired by his total dedication to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideal for the integration and rejuvenation of humanity as a whole. No award adorns a monk more than the grace of God with which he continually brings, as Sankaracarya puts it, a perpetual spring of divine thoughts and virtues in the community around him. And for a monk this community is never less than the entire humanity.

Today the crying need of a multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-religious India is the practical and holistic philosophy of Vedānta which can embrace all Indians irrespective of caste, creed and religion and unite them into one single family. And India needs her leaders and philosophers to translate this philosophy into action, and to guide the nation in these stormy days of increasing regionalism, terrorism and religious fundamentalism. Given this background, India, the land where saints and seers have always been honoured and worshipped before kings and generals, could not have a better choice for its national award than this venerable and beloved monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**AN ENQUIRY INTO TRUTH OR TATTVA VICHARA:** BY V. SUBRAMANYA IYER. Copies of the book can be had from Sri K. Subramanian, 'Subhasree' 36/A, Subramaniapuram Extension, Salem 636 007 and Sri G. S. Shyam, 'Pushpa Kunj', Nehru Road, Santacruz—East, Bombay 400 055. Published in 1982. Pp. 201. Rs. 40.

What is the nature of Reality—the ultimate and integral Truth of this infinitely variegated, complex creation? What is the mystery of the nature of one's real existence and inter-relationship with the creator and creation? These are some of the fundamental metaphysical questions which have always attracted the attention and

absorbed the thoughts of almost all the philosophers, prophets, and saints. In fact, all religions with their various schools of philosophy have come into existence directly or indirectly to unravel this mystery behind creation and to experience the reality ultimately. This search for truth encompasses the interest of not only a few religious leaders and philosophers but the whole of humanity, as it has wide-ranging impact on the pattern of life and thought of people all over the globe and constitutes the very basis of moral, cultural and social values of human society. In the book under review one finds a forceful presentation of this immemorial quest. The book is a collection of the essays, forewords, notes, conversations, speeches and letters of late V. Subramanya Iyer, a renowned exponent of Advaita philosophy of Sri Sankara. He was a prominent teacher of the Vedanta Study Circle of Mysore which trained several monks of the Ramakrishna Order in the 1930s. It is surprising to note that Sri Iyer in spite of his great erudition and influence did not attempt writing any book, though his suggestions and guidance were sought by many others who wrote books. Apart from serving as the Registrar of Mysore University for a number of years, it is evident from the book that Sri Iyer spent much of his time on absorbing studies in eastern and western philosophies, delivering lectures and discussing his views with many eminent scholars and philosophers like Henry Bergson and Bertrand Russell and scientists like Max Planck and James Jeans of international repute. His correspondence and discussions with distinguished personalities incorporated in the book indicate his popularity and the influence he exerted on them. Sri Iyer presided over the section of Indian Philosophy in the World Philosophy Congress held in 1937 at Paris.

All these credentials amply speak for the recognition Sri Iyer received at home and abroad for his intellectual brilliance and eminence in the field of philosophy, specially for his convincing exposition of Sankara's Advaita. His essays on Sankara's Advaita philosophy (chapter 1 & 2) and his foreword to the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Kārikā* (p. 117) indicate how deeply the author was influenced by them. A short life sketch under the title 'A Life in Pursuit of Truth' presented at the end of the book acquaints the reader with various facts of the author's distinctive personality. Chapter 16, 'The philosopher Prince', devoted to Kṛṣṇarāja Wodeyar, Maharaja of Mysore, whom he served as a

much respected friend, philosopher and guide, indicates the honour he received from the king for his remarkable scholarship.

In the second chapter Sri Iyer analyses in depth from a convincing comparative perspective the development of philosophy in the East and the West. Describing the condition laid by Sankara for the search of Ultimate Truth through reasoning, the author tries to establish its supremacy over western philosophical conclusions which, the author says, are lopsided and are in an infantile state in their understanding of the Ultimate Truth. For they are founded on the experience of only one state of human consciousness, namely the waking state, with the other two states, dream and deep sleep, having been totally ignored, whereas Sankara takes into account and explores in detail all the three states of consciousness (*avasthā traya*) while enquiring into the nature of reality.

Explaining the ideal of Indian philosophy (p. 17) the author rightly points out that philosophy does not mean building castles in the air or flights of imagination, but means direct experience. Indian philosophy is a means of showing the ideal way of living and the practical path in our daily life. This is borne out by the example of Lord Kṛṣṇa who gave highest knowledge to Arjuna at a battlefield. Sri Iyer dispels the wrong notions about philosophy prevailing among common people that it is a dry intellectual exercise without much practical application, and highlights the underlying pragmatic approach of Indian philosophy.

Examining the history of various religions and their failure to prevent wars and other harrowing experiences, the author rightly holds that religion, if not properly perceived, has in it seeds of disintegration and disharmony. Through a series of convincing arguments Sri Iyer tries to drive home the point that if the ethical and spiritual values of religion are ignored and the integrating influence of religion into groups is exploited for narrow selfish ends with only superficial fanatic adherence to religion, it will only lead to intolerance, war and bloodshed, pushing community life into the darkness of sorrow and chaos instead of goading it towards the realization of Truth and all-round welfare.

The author, however, seems to be somewhat unreasonable in his criticism of mysticism, emotion and supramental experiences when he says, 'Mysticism is resorted to by those that have met with serious disappointment in life or those that possess weak intellect'. (p. 23) This

statement may be true with regard to some stray cases, but becomes false in the light of the lives of great mystics. Being a staunch Advaitin gifted with a sharp rational mind and influenced to a considerable extent by the scientific thought of the West, the author has tried to prove the supremacy of the intellectual disciplines of the Advaita school of thought over the path of devotion. Instead of making Advaita all-inclusive, he has attempted to make it exclusive, thereby ignoring the testimony of countless saints and sages including Madhusūdana Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda. The human intellect, however superior it may be, too has limitations to comprehend the Ultimate Truth in its totality. Vedānta scriptures clearly state that a direct experience of the Ultimate Reality is possible only by transcending human intellect and reasoning. This immediate transcendental experience is ineffable and is hence termed mystical. However, the author's contention is that so long as emotion dominates the mind, religion, art and mysticism rule it. When emotion and intellect are assigned to their respective spheres, their limitation being known, reason dominates and the philosophy of Truth rules, reason being the faculty that ultimately distinguishes the true from the false (p. 25). But this statement again appears arbitrary because reason is not an independent, autonomous faculty of mind. It is an off-shoot or manifestation of the intellectual faculty which enables us to exercise the power of discrimination and is directly governed by the intellect itself, therefore, has all the limitations of intellect. Naturally, one may not fully agree with and accept in toto all the conclusions reached by the author. However, the thought provoking original ideas of the author reflect his intellectual brilliance and are very interesting in themselves.

The 10th chapter titled 'Truth, and the Creator and Ruler of the World' is very fascinating. In it the author enters into a long monologue, putting a series of searching questions to the Creator about the cause of such common phenomena as suffering, sorrow, pain and injustice in the world which are irreconcilable with His omniscient, omnipotent, blissful and compassionate nature. The range and depth of questions speak for the author's sensitivity to the problems of life and his capacity to explore the hidden mystery of Creator-creation relationship.

In the 6th chapter, on Sanskrit education and modern life, Sri Iyer evaluates the positive role and potentialities of Sanskrit culture and language

in the multi-linguistic, heterogeneous cultural life of India. For the achievement of this he rightly emphasizes the need for enriching Sanskrit by inducting modern thoughts into it so that it can grow.

A useful key for a novel way of studying the Gita is given (p. 135) by presenting a volley of important general questions on religion, philosophy, spiritual practice, and mentioning against them appropriate verses from different chapters of the Gita as the answers.

While analysing the role of Truth in bringing about world peace in the 5th chapter, the crux of the matter is well put by the author when he sounds the repeated warning that until Truth is loved and sought there can be no general peace or salvation in this world. He holds that the world is suffering chiefly because the leaders refuse to look at Truth. The author lauds the famous declaration made by the ancient Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato that rulers must be philosophers. The views of the author are backed by appropriate quotes from Indian scriptures, and the works of western thinkers, philosophers and poets, especially the works of Sankara, in different places.

Most of the arguments revolve round the same theme or converge on the same conclusion, namely, the need for enquiry into Ultimate Truth through reasoning based on the totality of experience or all the data of life or all the three states of consciousness.

The preface to the book written by the distinguished philosopher Sri T.M.P. Mahadevan, who also edited the book, indicates its worth and the superior philosophic enlightenment of the author.

Topics like Ananda in circus, Advaitin's interest in drama, 14 points in the dream problem, and summary of talk on death give an idea of the wide variety of themes the author was capable of dealing with.

The style of writing of the author is gripping and precise. In many places the discussions are lively and the approach is frank. The arguments have the ring of sincerity, straightforwardness and are based on a depth study of eastern and western philosophies, science, history, psychology, etc.

Those with an exclusively devotional temperament may find the book a bit provocative, whereas intellectuals and rational-minded people will find it stimulating and enlightening. The reading of this book will surely serve as a further invitation to a detailed study of

philosophy in general and Sankara's Advaita philosophy in particular.

SWAMI JAGADATMANANDA  
Acharya, Probationers' Training Centre  
Belur Math

**FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY:** By R. PULIGANDLA. Published by the University Press of America, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, Maryland 20706, U.S.A. 1985. Pp. 363. \$ 14.75.

R. Puligandla of the University of Toledo (U.S.A) presents in this book the main tenets of the different systems of Indian philosophy. The book is intended to serve as a text book for undergraduates. Though there are several books on the subject, the author finds none suitable for a quarter or semester introductory course. The contents, organization and method of treatment of the subject have grown out of the author's personal experience in teaching Eastern thought at the University of Toledo. The main aim of this book is not only to introduce the student to the problems, methods, goals, and temper of Indian philosophy, but also to arouse in him or her sufficient interest in the subject to undertake further study of Indian philosophy and culture.

The book begins with a general introduction in which the author vigorously counters the tendency of western philosophers to rule out, by the fiat of definition, non-western thought from the domain of philosophy and relegate it to myth, religion and poetry. He points out that the basic philosophical problems raised and the solutions proposed by Indian and European traditions are astonishingly similar. He then gives a list of the main characteristics common to all systems of Indian philosophy.

The subsequent chapters are devoted to Carvakism, Jainism, Buddhism, Samkhya, Yoga, Vaisheshika, Nyaya and Vedanta. The exposition is lucid, critical and illuminating. The last two chapters are devoted to 'Time and History in the Indian Tradition' and 'A Glimpse at the Contemporary Scene'. Each school of philosophy is discussed from the ontological, epistemological and ethical standpoints. Though this is a textbook intended for the use of students, the discussions are not rigidly formal or solely intended to prepare the student for his final examination, as Indian students might expect a book of this kind to be. Prof. Puligandla has tried to make his discussions interesting and stimulating. He raises innumerable questions

and his style is marked by vigour and directness. Elaborate notes have been appended to each chapter which contain additional quotations and remarks.

Having said all this, a few comments may now be offered in good faith.

In the General Introduction, the author has made certain observations, which, perhaps are not justified. On page 23 he says: 'Equally important is the fact that all schools of Indian philosophy teach that moksha is not a state to be looked forward to after death. Quite the contrary, it is to be attained here and now while one is still in one's bodily existence.' Nyaya Vaisheshika philosophers and Ramanuja of Visistadvaita Vedanta are of the opinion that liberation is possible only after death. On page 24, the author observes: 'One may, however, consider Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisheshika to be neither orthodox nor unorthodox, since they originated independently of the Vedas—that is, without accepting or rejecting them.' This is entirely against Indian tradition. Ordinarily in India we take all these systems as orthodox or Vaidic. Really these systems accept the Vedas as authoritative. Of course they believe in independent reasoning also, and hold that the Vedic conclusions can be justified entirely through unaided arguments.

On page 174, the author observes: 'It is only by the extraordinary perception of manhood as the essence of being man we say that all men are mortal.' Here he is discussing the Nyāya view of *sāmānya lakṣaṇa pratyakṣa*. The Naiyāyikas actually hold that through the ordinary perception of manhood in a man we perceive extraordinarily all men. Manhood or *sāmānya* performs the function of *sannikarṣa*.

On page 244, Prof. Puligandla says: 'Maya is the power of Brahman by which it manifests itself as the phenomenal world. It is beginningless and endless, being co-existent with Brahman itself.' The reference here is to Advaita Vedanta. The Advaitins never accept maya as endless. With the dawn of knowledge it vanishes. Maya is only a magical power. As the magician never considers this as any real power, so to Brahman this is no power at all.

On page 250, the author says: 'Just as the unreality of the imaginary standpoint (*prātibhāsika*). ' *Prātibhāsika*, to the Advaitins, is never unreal in the sense of a non-existent object like the son of a barren woman which never appears. A *prātibhāsika* object (the snake in the case of

snake-rope illusion) appears and so is unlike the unreal.

The chapter on time and history in Indian tradition is inadequate and incomplete. It could have been incorporated in the General Introduction itself.

In 'A Glimpse at the Contemporary Scene' Prof. Puligandla has discussed the views of Sri Aurobindo and Dr. Radhakrishnan. But Prof. K. C. Bhattacharya, an eminent philosopher of modern India has been omitted. The name of

Swami Vivekananda, who did so much to revive Hindu thought and restore its dignity, finds no mention anywhere in the book.

The addition of Glossary and Bibliography at the end has made the book more useful to students. We hope a cheaper Indian edition will be brought out soon.

DR. NIROD BARAN CHAKRABORTY  
Professor of Philosophy and Head of the  
Department, Presidency College  
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## NEWS AND REPORTS

### SRI SRI MATRI MANDIR AND RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SARADA SEVASHRAMA, JAYARAMBATI

REPORT FOR APRIL 1985 TO MARCH 1986

*Sri Sri Matri Mandir.* The little village of Jayarambatu remains much as it was when Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was born here in December 1853. It is now an important centre for pilgrimage well known among the seekers of truth in India and abroad. On the ground where Mother was born a temple enshrining her marble image has come up, and the two old cottages which served as her places of residence from 1863 to 1915 and from 1916 to 1920, and where numerous devotees were received by her and given initiation, are being maintained as shrines. All the year round thousands of devotees from all over the world come here to take back with them their share of holiness and inspiration. Daily religious discourses, Bhajan and prayers, as also Ramnam Sankirtan on every Ekadashi day, are held. Birthdays of great spiritual teachers—Sri Shankara, Sri Buddha, Sri Krishna, Jesus Christ, Sri Ramachandra, Sri Chaitanya, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda and the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna are also celebrated. The annual Pujas of Durga, Jagaddhatri and Kali are performed. About fifty thousand devotees received cooked prasada here during the year. The small library had 2,500 books.

The sub-centre, Ramakrishna Yogashrama at Koalpara, 8 kms from Jayarambatu, where Mother stayed on several occasions and installed the photographs of Sri Ramakrishna and herself in the shrine for daily worship, is being maintained as a place of retreat, as also is the Jagadamba Ashrama near by, where also Mother lived occasionally.

*Pallimangal:* Under the self-employment

scheme, training was imparted in weaving (to 11 people), hosiery (5 people) and rolling incense sticks (7 people).

The weekly mobile medical service provided medical relief to 7,680 people.

A windmill was installed on the bank of the river Amodar to provide lift irrigation for the fields of local farmers.

On Swamiji's birthday, the Youth Day was celebrated in a function attended by about 500 boys and girls of surrounding villages who actively participated in elocution, essay writing, recitation, singing and other activities.

*Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Sevashrama:* The Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Charitable Dispensary, started at the instance of the Mother in 1916 as a humble homoeopathic dispensary, treated 35,784 patients during the year. A branch of this dispensary opened at Ramakrishna Yogashrama in Koalpara in November 1983 treated 12,567 patients during the year. The Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Vidyapitha—begun as a night school during Mother's lifetime—now consists of a junior high school, two junior basic schools and two pre-basic nursery schools, is providing education to 762 students including girls. Aid from the State Government being meagre, the Sevashrama has to depend on the public in order to make these schools worthy of the Holy Mother's name. The library had 5,000 books.

*Present needs:* 1. Extension of school buildings: Rs. 5 lakh. 2. Construction of a boundary wall around the school campus: Rs. 3 lakh. 3. Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Sevashrama School Development Fund: Rs. 2 lakh. Remittances may kindly be made in the name either of Sri Sri Matri Mandir or of Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Sevashrama, P.O. Jayarambatu, District Bankura, West Bengal, PIN 722 161.



To commemorate the great event of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna and the Centenary of the Ramakrishna Order, we happily present our publication :

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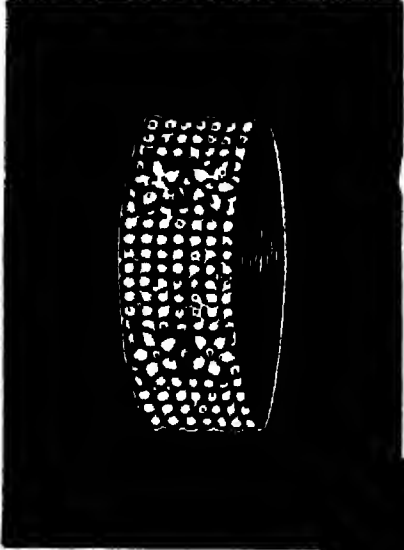
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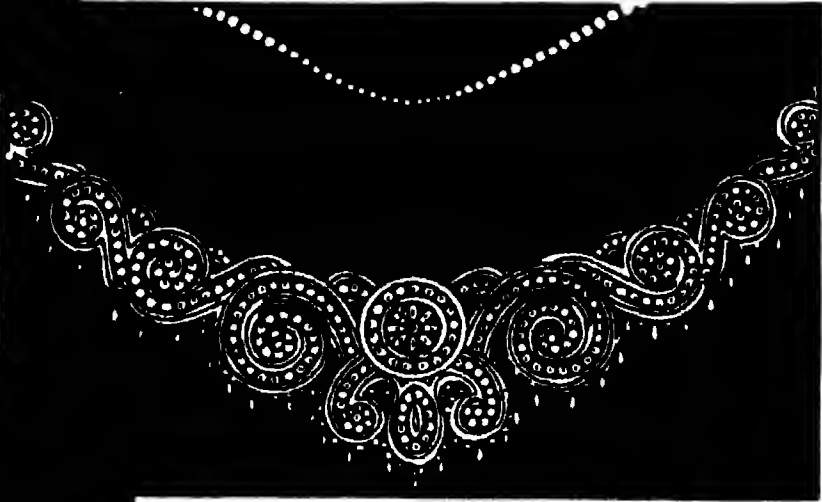
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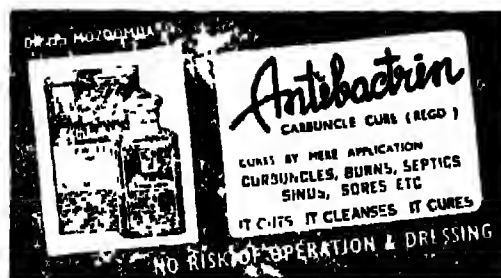
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## **SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA**

### **The Apostle of Sri Ramakrishna to the South**

by

Swami Tapasyananda

Sri Sri Sashi Maharaj more widely known as Swami Ramakrishnananda is a name dear to the heart of the devotees and disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Order and Mission. The self-effacing services he rendered from the monastery he conducted at Mylapore, Madras, in the beginning of the Century, and the part he played in the expansion of the Ramakrishna Movement in the State and elsewhere, are recorded in this volume.

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**Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.**

## ETERNAL VOICE OF INDIA

*Vidvayā vindate amrtam*

**'Immortality is attained through Self-knowledge'**

All this that you see in this mutable universe, should be enveloped by Self, the all-pervading and omnipresent God. By that renunciation (of the pleasures of this mutable world) alone, support your Self, the divinity within. Do not covet anybody's wealth, whether it is your own, or of somebody else's.

By blinding darkness are covered the worlds of those who live a God-less life. To these worlds return again and again those who have murdered the Self within.

He who perceives all objects as existent in his own Self, and the Self in all beings, hates none, by virtue of that realization.

When to the seer all things appear as nothing but his own Self, what delusion, what sorrow can there be for the seer of oneness ?

He (the Self) is all-pervading, self-resplendent, formless, scatheless, muscleless, pure, unaffected by ignorance, the poet and seer, omniscient, transcendent, and self-existent.

*Isāvāsya Upaniṣad (1,3,6,7,8)*

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL deals with some of the major ideas that surfaced in the International Seminar on 'Outer Space and Inner Space' held in New Delhi, in November 1986.

EDUCATIONAL IDEAS OF SISTER NIVEDITA: THEORY AND PRACTICE by Sri Anil Baran Ray, M.A., Ph. D. (Missouri, Columbia) and Mrs. Mamata Ray, describes how Sister Nivedita brought forth for the first time in modern India, the idea of education based on the ancient values and ideals of India, and how she struggled to infuse this spirit of national education into the lives of her students. Sri Anil Baran Ray is Professor of Political Science in Burdwan University.

Dr. Caribanu Cooper's article THE POEMS OF VIVEKANANDA is a short literary analysis of some of the poems of Swami Vivekananda. Dr. Cooper is Professor in the Humanities Department, University of

South Florida, USA.

THOUGHTS ON NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN PRE-INDEPENDENT INDIA is a brief account of how the three great national leaders, Lala Rajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal thought on national integration in India before independence. The author Dr Aroop Chakravarti is a lecturer in history in Vidyant Hindu Degree College, Lucknow.

Dr. D. Nirmala Devi, a Senior Research Fellow, in the University of Calicut discusses in her article CONCEPT OF NATURE IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA, various dimensions of nature, as reflected in the holy text.

THE CONQUEST, a one-act play, dramatizes the historic conversion of Chandashoka to Dharmashoka and his final surrender to the teachings of Buddha. The author, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, has written this drama under the pseudonym 'Bodhisattva'.

## OUTER SPACE AND INNER SPACE

(EDITORIAL)

Recently in November 1986 the ministry of arts, government of India, organized in New Delhi an International Seminar and an International Art Exhibition under the auspices of the Indira Gandhi Centre for Arts. The theme of the Exhibition was Ākāśa or space. The subject matter for the Seminar was *bhūtākāśa* and *cidākāśa*—outer space and inner space. Nearly sixty delegates from thirty countries including eminent scientists, historians, architects, engineers, town-planners, internationally celebrated authorities on religion, a senior lama from Tibet and a swami of the

Ramakrishna Order attended this Seminar. On 19 November 1986, in an impressive ceremony in Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, the prime minister formally declared the exhibition open to the public. He also welcomed the delegates from the different countries who had come to attend the Seminar. On 20 November 1986, Dr. D. S. Kothari, an eminent scientist of India, presided over the inaugural session of the seven-day-long Seminar.

The discussions on *bhūtākāśa* or outer space brought forth the idea of reverence for beauty and individual excellence in



our external life. The deliberations on *cidākāśa* or the inner space, brought forth a deeper awareness of the one undivided consciousness (*akhaṇḍa cit*) which one can realize in one's heart. This consciousness within is the basis of life in outer space. Everything exists in space. Einstein called space not merely space but, according to the theory of relativity, space-time continuum. All existence in space is related to time. And the way to the Absolute, beyond space-time relative existence, is through this very relative space, as another nobel-physicist Louis De Broglie said.

The Indian idea is to respect all space because it is the repository of all life. Space in Sanskrit is known as *kham*. Neglect of *kham* leads to *duḥkham*, sorrow. Respect to *kham* leads to *sukham*, happiness. By showing respect to the external space, man goes beyond it, and reaches the world of internal space. 'Deification of Life' is the central theme of the *Īśvāsyā Upaniṣad*. One can and should have the vision of God in everything by renunciation of selfish and sensate enjoyments. That is the goal of life. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* illustrates this great idea by means of a story. Satyakāma the son of Jābālā, was asked by his teacher to go to the forest and tend the four hundred lean and weak cows given to him. He decided not to return until the number of cattle increased to one thousand. All throughout this long time Satyakāma served the cattle with utmost respect. Being pleased with him, a bull, fire, a swan and a diver-bird taught him all the mysteries of life. Nature opened her secrets to this boy because of his utmost reverence for nature and all living beings. When he returned to his teacher, his face shone with the radiance of one who had realized the all-pervading presence of God.

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* advocates two kinds of knowledge, *parā* and *apurā*, the

secular and the transcendental, in order to reach fulfilment in life. This is the basis of a holistic approach to life according to Indian tradition. Indian scriptures explain these ideas in many different ways. The *Brahma-sūtra* explains in the aphorism 1.1.22, *ākāśah tat lingāt* or 'Space verily is Brahman for Brahman's indicatory work is in evidence'. Śamkarācārya equates space with the ultimate Reality. He says, 'By the word space here we should understand Brahman.' *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* explains, 'For all things originate from space, to be sure' (1.9.1). The same *Upaniṣad* (8.14.1) says again, 'Space indeed is the accomplisher of name and form'. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (3.4) describes space, sky or *vyoman*, as the repository of all knowledge, 'This is that knowledge received by Bhṛgu, which is established in the supreme *vyoman*.' *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (4.10.5) describes space as one with the Absolute Bliss, 'Om *ka*m (i.e. bliss) is Brahman, *kham*, space, is Brahman'. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (5.1) equates space with *Om*, Brahman or the ultimate Reality. 'Om is that *kham* (space)—the eternal space'.

The concept of space is beautifully illustrated in a story of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. Upakosala, the disciple of Jābālā Satyakāma decided to fast and practise severe austerities in order to realize the ultimate Reality, Brahman. The fires (whom the Brahmacarin had worshipped so long) felt compassion on this sincere aspirant, and gave him the true knowledge about the vital energy (*prāṇa*), joy, and space in which the entire created universe exists.

'*Prāṇa* (the vital energy) is Brahman, *ka* (bliss) is Brahman, *kha* (space) is Brahman.' (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 4.10.4). And again in the same *Upaniṣad* (4.10.5) it is said: 'What is *ka* (bliss) even that is *kha* (space); and what is *kha* (space), that is *ka* (bliss).'

Then comes the point of subtle distinc-

tion. The fires tell the seeker that in order to know the ultimate Reality one must enter the world of *cidākāśa*, i.e. the space within the heart. What is the nature of *cidākāśa* and how to enter this realm of inner space? The *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* (12.16) explains: 'In the citadel of the body, there is the small, sinless and pure lotus of the heart which is the residence of the Supreme. Further in the interior of this small area there is the sorrowless space (*gaganam viśokam*) that is to be meditated upon.' But how is it that space is one with *prāṇa* (the primal energy behind the universe)? *Praśna Upaniṣad* (verse no. 14) explains that *prāṇa* (energy) is one with *rayih* (food). Food is nothing but matter, or *ākāśa*. Śaṅkarācārya comments, '*prāṇa* and *rayi* convey the ideas of energy and matter'.<sup>1</sup> *Ākāśa* (space or matter) is thus equated with *prāṇa*. (energy). Einstein proved the same idea by showing that energy is only another form of matter. In modern physics there is no such thing as empty space. Space, as we have seen, cannot be empty. American physicist John A. Wheeler says that space, though outwardly empty, is nevertheless 'the seat of most violent physics'.<sup>2</sup>

The Vedas and Upaniṣads are full of passages conveying man's intense reverence for everything animate or inanimate in this world of outer space. Here is, for instance, an extremely moving invocation to water from the *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* (1.54): 'O waters, verily you are bliss-conferring. Being such, grant us food, and great and beautiful insight (of the Supreme Truth). Further make us in this very life participators of that joy of yours which is most auspicious, just like fond mothers' (who nurse their

darlings with nourishment). May we attain to that satisfactory abode of yours which you are pleased to grant us. Generate for us also waters of life and pleasures on earth (during our sojourn here).'

The external world, the world of outer space, the *bhūtākāśa*, is a combination of matter (*ākāśa*) and *prāṇ* (energy). But this *prāṇa*, again, is a projection from the Self within. The *Praśna Upaniṣad* (3.3) explains this idea:

From the Self is born this *prāṇa*. Just as there can be a shadow when a man is there, so this *prāṇa* is fixed on the Self. He comes to this body owing to the actions of the mind.

The *Mundaka Upaniṣad* says that the ultimate reality interpenetrates both this external and internal world. We can enjoy with all our senses of sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing, the external world of *bhūtākāśa*. But the way to *cidākāśa* is a way that transcends senses. All meditation on the *cidākāśa* is, therefore, essentially transcendental in nature. But once we have been adept in this meditation, internal prayers and japa, and succeeded to open the door to the *cidākāśa* (the internal space within our heart) we get a glimpse of the ultimate Reality. And then it is not difficult to understand that the external space (*bhūtākāśa*) is, indeed, a projection of the *cidākāśa*, the internal space. Swami Vivekananda, the greatest exponent of the ancient Vedānta philosophy in modern times, explains these ideas in his celebrated 'Introduction' to *Rāja Yoga* as also in countless other lectures:

Everything that we see, or imagine or dream, we have to perceive in space. This is the ordinary space called the Mahakasa, or elemental space. When a Yogi reads the thoughts of other men or perceives supersensuous objects, he sees them in another sort of space called the Cittakasa, the mental space. When perception has become

1. Swami Gambhirananda *Eight Upanishads* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama 1958) Vol. 2, p. 412

2. Quoted in Heinz Pagels, *The Cosmic Code* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983) p. 243.

objectless, and the soul shines in its own nature, it is called the Chidakasha, or knowledge space.<sup>3</sup>

The internal universe, the *real* is infinitely greater than the external, which is only a shadowy projection of the true one. The world is neither true, nor untrue, it is a shadow of truth.<sup>4</sup>

This is the basic Indian philosophical approach to Reality which is distinct from the commonly accepted western approach. In 1900 in San Francisco Swami Vivekananda pointed out:

It is not the infinite of space, but the real Infinite, beyond space, beyond time. Such is the world missed by the occident. Their minds have been turned to external nature and nature's god.<sup>5</sup>

Vivekananda also explained the difference between the occidental approach of the Greeks and the oriental approach developed by Indians:

Two curious nations there have been sprung of the same race, but placed in different circumstances and environments, working out the problems of life each in its own particular way. I mean the ancient Hindu and the ancient Greek. The Indian Aryan, bounded on the north by the snow-caps of the Himalayas, with fresh-water rivers like rolling oceans surrounding him in the plains, with eternal forests which, to him, seemed to be the end of the world, turned his vision inward, and given the natural instinct, the superfine brain of the Aryan, with this *sublime* scenery surrounding him, the natural result was that he became introspective. The analysis of his own mind was the great theme of the Indo-Aryan.

With the Greek, on the other hand, who arrived at a part of the earth which was more beautiful than sublime, the beautiful islands of the Grecian Archipelago, nature all around him generous yet simple, his mind naturally went outside. It wanted to analyse the external world. And as a result we find that from India have

sprung all the analytical sciences and from Greece all the sciences of generalization.<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Raja Ramanna, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, India, in his inaugural address in the Seminar, struck at the root of the theme of space, the mystery of human consciousness. It is consciousness which is responsible for our perception of both the external and the internal space. Physical sciences, admitted the eminent physicist, have failed to define consciousness.

Physical space claims that it can eventually explain all knowledge including that of consciousness since its basic building blocks are indistinguishable molecules, but at the moment with all its successes the word 'consciousness' remains undefinable. It is a situation in which we know that something exists but can find no clear description in physical terms. Nearly 1,300 years ago, Adi Sankara in his *Dakṣiṇāmurti stotra*, verse 23, says 'if consciousness was not self-manifested then the universe would be blind darkness'. This celebrated statement shows that consciousness has to be self-manifested and if it was not there, nobody would know that there is such a thing as physical space.

Physical sciences consider, says Dr. Ramanna, 'the existence of consciousness as a separate entity and yet without its very existence there can be no physical space.' Ādi Śamkarācārya was the first Indian philosopher who made a systematic analysis of the consciousness at its various levels. Dr. Ramanna highlighted this contribution of Śamkara:

A logical approach to the study of consciousness as a philosophico-scientific entity has only been attempted by Samkara. It is quite possible that we will never know what consciousness is mainly because the possible phases of consciousness in our brains are too constrained for asking questions about itself. Samkara believes that we must create a new conscious state well outside the waking state, the dream stage, drug stage etc.

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta, Advaita Ashrama, 1977) Vol. 1, p. 162 (Henceforward referred to as *Complete Works*).

4. *Complete Works* (1979), Vol. 2, p. 11.

5. *Complete Works* (1979), Vol. 1, p. 500.

6. *Complete Works* (1979), Vol. 3, p. 270.

He asserts that it is a state that can be achieved where the oneness of the diversity of all knowledge can be clearly seen.

This new state of consciousness is, 'the superconscious state', from where the individual realizes that the activities of his conscious or unconscious (dreaming) state are both projections of our will and desires on the eternal background, the undivided Consciousness.

Dr. Raimundo Panikkar, from Spain, one of the few outstanding theologians of our times, took the holistic or Advaitic view regarding the inner and the outer space. In his paper entitled, 'There is no outer without inner space', Dr. Panikkar said:

In some cultures space has become mainly a physical notion and only by extension a spiritual one. Our underlying assumption will be the advaitic or non dualistic relationship between the two. This means that we neither identify inner and outer space as being the same, nor separate the two such as to make only one of them real space and the other an analogical device. This implies that we recognize an underlying and more fundamental experience of space of which the inner and the outer are two qualified modes.

Modern physical concept of space as only a space-time continuum is a very limited and inadequate concept regarding space. Dr. Panikkar said.

But time, after Einstein, is not conceivable without space. Thus the space-time scheme seems to be common to all human disciplines. But this time-space is still far from that holistic experience of space we are looking for. Spatiality is a human existential. But this spatiality which is constitutive of Man is not an exclusively inner world of thoughts, dreams and actions where we live. It is not either the external clues, places, buildings in which we exist. Both are co-penetrated so that one is impossible without the other. The outer cannot exist without the inner, as well as vice-versa.

The Swami from the Ramakrishna Order, India, took up the thread of

discussion led by Dr. Panikkar and pushed it further into the domain of man's consciousness. It is not just that there is no outer space without the inner space. The more important fact is that the outer space is a projection of the inner space.

Vedanta philosophy believes that it is our own consciousness which creates the world outside. Does a man while in deep and dreamless sleep (*susupti*) have any consciousness of the world outside? Is a man who is dreaming of a dreadful tiger in sleep, aware that he is lying on a cosy bed in a perfectly safe room? *Dig-Dṛṣya-īśvaka* (verse no. 1) states:

*Dṛṣṭvā dhi yitavyāḥ sakṁ dig eva nō tu dṛṣyate*  
'All the scenes before us are projections of our intellect (activated by the presence of our consciousness). The only seer is the Self (the pure consciousness) inside us. This Self cannot be seen because it is itself the seer.

The Swami in his paper on 'Consciousness creates the outer world' showed how new ideas in modern physics are today supporting this view.

Today this ancient Vedantic concept is getting increasing support from the discoveries and interpretations of Quantum Physics. In the year 1927, Heisenberg discovered his uncertainty principle. According to the uncertainty principle a sub-atomic particle has no distinctive, objective reality. It is, as Michael Talbot put it, 'Omnijjective'—an inseparable combination of the subject of the scientist and the object observed. Heisenberg declared that 'the common division of the world into subject and object, inner world and outer world, body and soul is no longer adequate and leads us into difficulties.'<sup>7</sup>

7. Ken Wilber (Ed.), *The Spectrum of Consciousness* (Illinois: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1982) p. 39.

But now arises a more important question. If reality is 'Omnijjective', which of the two components (subject and object), is primary? Does the external object bring awareness in the subject or does the subjective consciousness lend reality to the external world? This question was resolved once for all by the Austrian nobel-physicist Erwin Schrodinger. Schrodinger developed a new equation on the wave nature of every particle in the universe. This is the celebrated 'wave-equation'. This equation suggested that an electron, or a sub-atomic particle may sometimes appear simultaneously in two, three, or many different forms. This may sound strange, but it was found true both mathematically and experimentally. Schrodinger explained this idea through his well-known thought-experiment known as 'Schrodinger's Cat'. This thought-experiment suggests that the world in front of us is a world of 'multi-dimensional reality'.

Following this line of thinking, in 1957 physicists Hugh Everette, John A. Wheeler and Mill Graham examined the issues. They subsequently created the 'Everette-Wheeler' interpretation of quantum mechanics. This interpretation is called appropriately, the 'many-world interpretation' of quantum mechanics. Reality according to this latest interpretation of modern physics, is 'observer created reality'. We create our own world. The external world is just a suggestion on which we project our own thoughts and feelings. Mary Magdalene saw the face of God in Jesus at the very moment when Roman soldiers were nailing him on the Cross. Max Planck, the father of modern physics, said, 'Consciousness, I regard as fundamental. I regard matter as derived from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing

postulates consciousness.'<sup>8</sup> Wolfgang Pauli, another nobel-physicist also offers the same view on these latest findings in quantum physics. He writes in words which are, in fact, interchangeable with the just-quoted words of *Drg-Drśya-Viveka*: 'From an inner centre the psyche seems to move outward, in the sense of an extraversion, into the physical world'<sup>9</sup>

The Seminar, however, was not limited to the discussion of the metaphysical aspects of space only. In fact, the greater portion of this seven-day seminar discussed how the different concepts of space in different types of cultures have influenced and shaped the art, architecture and music of these cultures. Art, architecture, music and science—all these are basically expressions of man's struggle to deal with the vast space in front of him and the infinite space he feels within himself. 'Art, Science and Religion are but three ways of expressing a single truth. But in order to understand it, one must accept Advaita', said Swami Vivekananda. The entire Seminar was, in a sense, a vindication of this central idea.

The western concept of space, and its influence on art and architecture, can be found in the art and architecture of Greece. In fact, as Swami Vivekananda put it, 'It is Greece that speaks through everything in Europe. Every building, every piece of furniture has the impress of Greece upon it. European science and art are nothing but Grecian.'<sup>10</sup> What are the distinctive

8. C.E.M. Joad, *Philosophical Aspects of Modern Science* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1932) p. 12.

9. Quoted in Gary Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* (New York: Morrow Hill Paperbacks, 1979) p. 56.

10. *Complete Works* (1979) Vol 3, p. 271

features of Greek architecture? The Greek architecture was an expression of 'finite human identity in the vastness of an infinite universe.' Man, with all his littleness stood face to face against the vast space that lay in front of him in the form of sky, hills, and Mediterranean sea. He wanted to assert his own 'identity', and retain his individuality. The Greek, by and large, never thought of the unity of macrocosm and microcosm. For him the two stood apart and never merged into one another. Anastasio Tanoulas, a Greek architect who represented the ministry of culture and science from Greece explained this viewpoint in the seminar in his paper on 'Greek Concept of Space as reflected in ancient Greek architecture'.

Everywhere in Greece nature takes an interest, a share in the works of men, and men take her into account. Nature commands, but so does man. Everything in Greece—literally each thing. From the smallest to the greatest, every element is distinct, and appears proud of itself, aware of its necessity to the whole.

The very strong feeling for *individuality* [not holistic view] so characteristic of the Greeks matched with a very strong feeling of community, and resulted in the city states and democratic regimes of the late Archaic and Classical period.

The same concept of space dominates the construction of Egyptian Pyramids. This is how a Japanese architect once captured the spirit behind the construction of colossal pyramids:

When I first saw the pyramids of Giza, in the midst of virtually infinite desert space, I instantly understood why the ancient Egyptians were so zealous to construct the pyramids.

The infinities of nature the infinite presence of the desert, the infinite expansion of blue sky, the desert sky at night with its innumerable stars as immeasurable as infinity. Human

identity in contrast with the infinite. This was the pyramid.<sup>11</sup>

The entire Judeo-Christian art and architecture is basically influenced by the Semitic dualism between God and man. God is the ruler who presides over the universe. It is an austere Father image. Man, the puny creature who lives on earth, was once brought to existence by Adam and Eve. The Cartesian dualism between God and man is strictly maintained. Man, in his struggle to keep his identity, 'refuses to be absorbed by the Infinite'. The huge cathedrals with their sky-touching spires are examples of man's quest for the Absolute God thought to be existing somewhere above in the vast space of the universe. But the interior of the cathedrals expresses the western man's concept of finite, enclosed space where he dwells. Bruno Queysanne, another western participant in the seminar, discussed the above idea in his paper on 'Between Light and Shade: Gothic Architecture'. He said, 'In the Gothic cathedrals, the shells of space are built with a diaphanous structure from the blindness of the stones to the darkly-lit of the stained glass windows.' The only source of contact between man inside and God outside is the huge glass window of the huge cathedral through which the radiance of heaven penetrates into the life of man. Shelly's lines express this idea most aptly.

Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,  
stains the white radiance of Eternity.

The Indian concept of space and its influence on architecture was the theme of some of the more prominent papers in the

<sup>11</sup>. Koichi Nagashima 'Architectural Space Concepts—Identity versus Harmony'. *PHP* (Singapore: PHP International Pte Ltd) August 1980. pp 30-31.

seminar. Dr. Lokesh Chandra, Bettina Baumer, Michael, W. Meister, Prof. Shankara Pillai, Stella Kramrisch, and Balakrishna Doshi dealt with this theme in various ways.

Man, the human being, the microcosm, is described in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (8.1.1-2) as the 'city of Brahman'. Indian temple-architecture is an expression of this microcosmic reality inside man. The *Yogaśikṣā-Upaniṣad* (1.1.68) describes this human body as *Śivālaya*. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.1) speaks of the same as *Devālaya*. Śaṅkara in his '*Śiva mānasa-pūjā-stotra*' speaks of this human body as the house of Atman (*śarīram gṛham*). Within the heart of man is the small inner space, the '*dahura ākāśa*'. Inside this *dahura ākāśa* is the 'spiritual lotus' in which the Self or God in man, remains hidden. Stella Kramrisch, the renowned specialist in Indian art, pointed out these very ideas, in her paper: 'Space in Indian Cosmogony and its Architecture':

In the architecture of the temple the two innermost, macrocosmic and microcosmic, concepts are conjoint in the shape of the *garbhagṛha* and that of the ideational pillar that traverses this small innermost sanctuary. The two conjoint themes are enshrined in the massive temple walls

Created once again, not cosmogonically, though, but statistically, this creation, the edifice of the temple in the density of images that emerge from and have their station on the bulwork of its walls—is a reiteration in its own terms, a reconstruction of the all-filling *akāśa* and of the waves of the flood prior to creation.

Their density, in the hands of the creative artist, invests the architectural monument; it is principal to the form of Indian sculpture and painting as well. There is no 'empty space' in Indian art. The space that lies between heaven and earth, *antarikṣa* is bounded, it is full of light, full of heavenly bodies, full of rivers and earth, pervaded by *akāśa*.

Temples of South India have got distinct anthropomorphic structures. The *garbha*

*gṛha* corresponds to the *cidākāśa* or *dahara ākāśa*. The *vigraha* or the deity represents the Self hidden within us. The *rātmaṇḍapam*, or the music hall corresponds to heart where devotion is felt. The *balipīṭha* or sacrificial spot represents that place in human body where the animal propensities manifest most, and the animal in man must be sacrificed in order to reach the Self. The *dhvajastambha*, the towering pillar at the entrance of the temple represents the conquest of the Self over the non-self in man.

On 19 November 1986, the opening day of the seminar, nearly fifty musicians played inside the Vigyan Bhavan the celebrated Panchavadya of Kerala. In its deep and solemn rhythm, in the alternation of sound and silence, pause and resonance, one could feel the rhythm of the cosmic dance of Śiva. Music, to the Indians, is the doorway to the regions beyond music. It arises in outer space with the vocal sound or the striking of the instruments. Then it creates ripples in the *cittākāśa*, the mental space. Finally the music leads the listener to the region beyond music. Then one experiences the *anāhata dhvani*, (the unstruck sound, in the silence of the *cidākāśa*). Dr. Premalata Sharma, Vice-chancellor, Indira Kala Sangit Visva-vidyalaya, M.P., held up this idea in her paper, '*Ākāśa and Sound*':

Concentration on different points in inner elemental space is somewhat essential in music and there is every possibility of transcending inner elemental space and taking a leap or plunge into *Chidakāśa* (space of consciousness).

Sri Rāmākrishna used to say: 'You explain AUM, as A. U and M. You call these three syllables as corresponding to creation, sustenance and dissolution. But I compare OM with the 't-a-a-m-m' sound



of the bell; t-a-a-m-m shows that from the relative (*līlā*) the sound moves to the Absolute (*nitya*); from the outer space (the gross) sound moves into the inner space (the subtle or the *cidākāśa*). From the three stages of our life—waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep—the AUM takes us to Turīya, the stage transcending these three stages.<sup>12</sup> *Brahmaṇḍa Upaniṣad* (12-13) describes how the sound of a bell which arises in external space (*bhūtākāśa*) leads us to the stage of absolute silence (of *cidākāśa*) which is Brahman itself.

Swami Vivekananda told nearly a century ago in the Harvard Graduate Philosophical Society that civilization is the manifestation of the divinity in man. The sensate cultures which give primacy to outer space, Vivekananda knew, will one day turn to the space within for fulfilment in life. He felt that India must rise up and deliver this message to the entire world. The influx of the West on the soil of India, according to Vivekananda, was the beginning of a new world culture when these ancient Vedantic ideas would go abroad. 'Today the ancient

Greek is meeting the ancient Hindu on the soil of India', he said.

On the pleasant winter evening of 20 November 1986, as the delegates from different countries were leaving the Indian International Centre of New Delhi, after the first day's deliberations, one could feel that a new horizon had already opened before them. It is the immortal spirit or consciousness within us which creates and shapes matter. Man needs both the spirit and matter, both *yin* and the *yan*, the intuitive and the material aspects of life. And space, or life as a whole, when treated with reverence, leads us to the world beyond space, to immortality. This is the message that was delivered in the seminar. One could get the impression of reverence for India in the bright faces of the delegates on that winter evening. One could remember the immortal lines of Tagore 'Awaken, O my mind, steadily on this vast sea shore of all humanity, this blessed pilgrimage, India'. One could hear the voice of Vivekananda, 'India will be raised, not by the power of the flesh, but by the power of the spirit.' One could realize the emergence of a Prabuddha Bharata—an Awakened India.

12. Shri Kumar Krishna Nandi, *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa O Śāstra Pramāṇa* (Calcutta: Students' Library, 1947) p. 142.

## EDUCATIONAL IDEAS OF SISTER NIVEDITA : THEORY AND PRACTICE

MAMATA RAY and ANIL BARAN RAY

The meaning of the word *India* and the place of India in the world together with a burning desire to serve *India*, the *soil* and the *people*, are the things that are to be recognized as education for women. These things are the centre.<sup>1</sup>

1. See Sankari Prasad Basu (Ed.) *Letters of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1982) Vol. 2, p. 1056.

So wrote Sister Nivedita. The quoted lines contain the essence of the educational ideas of Sister Nivedita which she sought to translate into practice by opening a school for girls and women in the Baghbazar area of Calcutta.<sup>2</sup>

2. Sister Nivedita (born Margaret Elizabeth Noble in 1867 in Ireland) came to India, at the



## I

What was the need and rationale for establishing such a school? The rationale lay in the fact that the system of education as it was prevalent at that time was a *discipline* rather than a *development*. Taking into account the three R's at the primary stage and higher education at the university stage, the prevalent system covered only a handful of Bengali girls—*mere* six and a half per cent of the total population of Bengal. There was, therefore, a great need for further diffusion of education along meaningful lines. Having established the rationale, Nivedita pointed out that education in her school should mean *development adapted to the actual needs of lives*. 'It is undeniable that if we could add to the present lives of Indian women, larger scope for individuality, a larger social potentiality and some power of economic redress, without adverse criticism, direct or indirect, of present institutions, we should achieve something of which there is dire necessity.'<sup>3</sup>

Nivedita was asked in the West about the purpose in establishing her school in India. The answer that she gave deserves to be quoted in view of the clarity with which she articulated her purpose :

To give *education* [not instruction merely] to orthodox Hindu girls in a form that is suited to the needs of the country. I recognise that if any Indian institutions are faulty it is the right of the Indian people themselves to change them. We may only aim to produce ripe judgement and power of action. Also, I consider that we should confer a direct benefit on any Indian woman

instance of her Master Swami Vivekananda, in January, 1898 and established a school for girls in Baghbazar of Calcutta in November of the same year. The Holy Mother Sarada Devi inaugurated the school and blessed it along with Swami Vivekananda.

3. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982) Vol. 4, p. 376.

whom we could enable to earn her own living, without loss of social honour.<sup>4</sup>

Implicit in the above statement is the educational philosophy of Sister Nivedita on two counts. First, like her Master,<sup>5</sup> she believed in natural growth. Education must have the stand-point of the learner and help him/her to develop in his/her own way. This philosophy of natural growth found explicit statement in a letter she wrote to Alberta Sturges (Lady Sandwich) on 27 September 1908.

The fact is, *Education*, like growth, *must be always from within*. Only the inner struggle, only the will of the taught is of avail. Those who think otherwise do so only because they are ignorant of education as a science by itself. We know that it is true of ourselves as individuals, that only the effort we make ourselves advances us. All the hammering in the world from outside, would be useless—if indeed it did not repel, and destroy our will to climb. The same is true of societies as of individuals—education must be from within.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, she would do nothing to disturb the existing social, religious, or economic order. She would offer no criticism of the existing institutions with which the Indians were familiar, believing that every country had a right to lay down its own etiquette and was entitled to have respect for it. This was where the Christian missionaries had gone wrong—in seeking not the furtherance of Indian social life but its disintegration. 'The missionaries are mistaken because, whether right or wrong in their assertion of the present

4. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 4, p. 379.

5. Swami Vivekananda: '...all is a growth from inside out... the seed can only assimilate the surrounding elements, but grows a tree in its own nature'. See *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972) Vol. 4, p. 347.

6. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 915.

need of education, they are not in a position to discriminate rightly the elements of value in the existing training of Oriental girls for life.<sup>7</sup> The Christian educationists disregarded the value of education that a girl received from her grandmother at home. Far from neglecting such education, Nivedita put a premium on it :

There ought to be interaction between school and home. But the home is the chief of these two factors. To it, the school should be subordinated, and not the reverse. That is to say, the education of an Indian girl should be directed towards making of her a more truly-Indian woman. She must be enabled by it to recognise for herself what are the Indian ideals, and how to achieve them ; not made contemptuous of these ideals, and left to gather her own from the moral and social chaos of novels by Ouida ... Indian ideals of family cohesion, of charity, of frugality and of honour ; the admiration of the national heroes ; the fund of poetic legends, must be daily and hourly discussed and commented on. All that makes India, must flow through the *Indian home to make it Indian*.<sup>8</sup> (Emphasis added).

What courses would Nivedita offer in the school to drive this sense of Indianness to the very bone of Indians ? Founded on the kindergarten system, the school would offer :

1. Bengali language and literature
2. English language and literature
3. Elementary mathematics
4. Elementary science
5. Manual training, by which she meant the use of hands for the making of handicrafts. The immediate objective of the last subject was to enable every pupil to earn her own living, without leaving her home. Its ultimate objective was to bring about a revival of old Indian industries and arts. It should not go unmentioned here that in including manual training in the curriculum, Sister Nivedita anticipated one of the basic foundations of Gandhiji's *Nai Talim* and

what goes by the name of vocational education at the present time. Worthy of mention in this connection is the fact that Nivedita proposed to take the help of the Hindu widows in her school. (She had a women's section added to the girls' section in her school in 1903) 'to organise two or three industries for which promising markets can be opened up in England, India and America. Amongst these, the making of native jams, pickles and chutneys is to be included.'<sup>9</sup> This sort of thinking in terms of making women stand on their own legs' economically should be considered revolutionary in view of rigid orthodoxy of the Hindu society of that time

Since Nivedita's school was modelled on the kindergarten,<sup>10</sup> it is necessary to note what exactly she meant by this system. She despised imitation and all things foreign, and yet how is it that she followed a system which was of foreign origin ? Is there any apparent contradiction ? No, there is no contradiction if the real import of what she meant by its use in the Indian context is understood. The system was, no doubt, of

9. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol 4, p 377. It should be noted here that a great advocate of industrial education and economic emancipation of women, Swami Vivekananda talked of setting up cottage industries at Belur Math and he was the first to moot the idea to Sister Nivedita that the girls at her school could make jam etc. Greatly elated over this idea, Nivedita wrote in her letter to Miss MacLeod, dated 7.6.1899: 'It strikes me as excellent. You have no idea of the deliciousness of green mango jam. And of course, you know Bengali Chutney. I am sure we can do this, and it would be widening the scope of our work educationally. To be managed entirely by women, think of that! Of course, we would make a very small beginning. Oh, I am dying to really earn what we want.' *Letters of Sister Nivedita* Vol. 1, p. 162.

10. Kindergarten literally means the garden of the children. In the system the school is likened to a garden, the teacher to a gardener, and every child to a plant.

7. Ibid., p. 193.

8. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* Vol. 5, pp. 74-75.

foreign origin in that the Swiss educationist Pestalozzi laid down its broad principles and the German educationist Froebel made the first application of these principles in certain directions. Nivedita made it clear from the very outset that the kindergarten in Europe and the kindergarten in India were two different things. She *Indianized* the kindergarten, making that system an 'efflorescence of Indian life itself'.<sup>11</sup>

As she insightfully observes in her letter to Swami Akhandananda, 'India cannot swallow the kindergarten as practised in Germany. But she can learn to understand that, and then make one of her own, different in details, but concordant in intention'.<sup>12</sup> Nivedita suggests the development in schools of home art<sup>13</sup> such as clay modelling, paper cutting, and drawing in the form of *alpana*. She also found great virtue in the image-worship of the Hindus, in cow-puja<sup>14</sup> and in the traditional religious vows or *vratas* observed by Indian girls.<sup>15</sup> Writes Nivedita:

11. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 4, p. 406.

12. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 2, p. 580.

13. 'The right course is not to introduce a foreign process', she writes, 'but to take home art and develop it along its own lines, carrying it to greater ends, by growth from within.' *Ibid.*, p. 579.

14. Nivedita writes in a footnote in *The Web of Indian Life*: 'I was informed by so authoritative a body as the professors in the Minnesota College of Agriculture, USA, that this procedure of the Hindu Women is strictly scientific'. 'The cow is only able to yield her full possibility of milk to a milker whom she regards as her own child'. See *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 2, p. 55.

15. Waxing eloquent over the 'beauty' of these *vratas* preserved from time immemorial and handed down from generation to generation, Nivedita writes that they are good not only as lessons in worship but also in terms of maintaining social relationships and good manners. She asks, how could the Indian women be other than graceful when as a child she learns to ask

The religious education of Hinduism is a complete development not only of the religious, but also of the domestic and social mind. . The image is a means of basing the idea of divine energy on concrete sensation. The girls' *vratas*, the cow-puja, and fifty other things, are a complete inclusion of this theory [Kindergarten] in Hinduism itself, and the right way would be to start from them, and go further if possible. Meanwhile, the beginning of education may be in the concrete, but its end lies in the trained attention, and power of concentrating the mind--and that India understands, as Europe never can.<sup>16</sup>

## II

This discussion on Nivedita's educational ideas will remain incomplete without mentioning how she sought to give her pupils national consciousness in her own school at Baghbazar.<sup>17</sup> In view of the great

mentally even a plant its permission before cutting its blossoms. 'O Tulsi, beloved of Vishnu' says the little maiden, about to gather the basil-leaves for worship, 'grant me the blessing to take you to his feet!' and only after a pause does she begin to pluck. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 4, p. 401.

16. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 2, p. 580.

17. Unselfish love and dedicated service characterized the development of the school. Nivedita had to beg money in foreign countries such as the USA and money in aid from foreign well-wishers for running the school. The privations she had to suffer going to the extent of cutting down her expenses on rice and milk has been noted even by Rabindranath Tagore. See Sarala Devi, *Niveditake Jemon Dekhiachi* (Bengali), p. 17. She was assisted in running the school by Sister Christine, an American disciple of Swami Vivekananda, about whom Nivedita wrote: 'All the things that Swami dreamt for me, she is fulfilling'. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 2, p. 589. Another person who assisted greatly these two in their work for the school was Sudhira Devi. She read up to class VIII in the Brahmo Girls' School and was inspired to offer her honorary service to Nivedita's School by her elder brother, Debabrata Basu, a revolutionary who subsequently became a Sannyasin at the Belur Math.

purpose she sought to realize, her school may unhesitatingly be called the first national school for girls on modern lines. She taught her pupils geography, history, needle-work and drawing. Most interesting were her classes on Indian history. She had a passion for it. She believed that 'a national consciousness expresses itself through history, even as a man realizes himself by the memories and associations of his own life'.<sup>18</sup> While talking about historical 'personages in the class she would even forget that she was in the class room. This happened one day when she was talking in the class about her visit to Chitor: 'I went up the hill and sat down on my knees. I closed my eyes and thought of Padmini. I saw Padmini Devi standing near the pyre and tried to think of the last thought that might have crossed Padmini's mind.'<sup>19</sup> She would relate the story with gestures and manners so lively that it would seem as if she were in Chitor at that moment in time. Her objective in bringing back alive to her pupils the history of India was to excite their imagination and emotions and thus nurture in them the idea of India as an absorbing passion.<sup>20</sup>

Having told her girls stories about the Rajput women, she would exhort them: 'You must all be like them. Oh Daughters of Bharata! You all vow to be like the Kshatriya women.'<sup>21</sup> It is worth quoting Pravrajika Atmaprana, the biographer of Sister Nivedita, on how Sister Nivedita always reminded the girls that they were the daughters of Bharata-Varsha:

During the Swadeshi Movement she took the girls to the Brahmo Girls' School so that they

might listen to lectures given in the adjoining park. In the Swadeshi Exhibition organised by the Congress in 1906, Nivedita sent the handicraft of her students for display. She introduced spinning in her school and appointed an old lady for the task whom the girls called Charka-Ma. At a time when the singing of *Bande-Mataram* was prohibited by the Government, she introduced it daily in her school prayers.<sup>22</sup>

Elsewhere Atmaprana writes:

When the Swadeshi Movement started she (Nivedita) came forward to boycott foreign goods and encouraged her pupils to do the same. . . The idea of a national flag first came to Nivedita's mind in 1906 during the Calcutta session of the Congress. She chose the design of the *vajra*, the thunderbolt, had it embroidered by her pupils, and displayed it in the Congress Exhibition. By such activities she instilled into her students the spirit of patriotism and love for their own historical and cultural ideals.<sup>23</sup>

She was greatly fond of education by public spirit, and by travel—not purposeless travel, but travel for an idea. 'To prepare one's daughters to understand their country when they see her, would not be a bad way of summing up the object of childhood schooling',<sup>24</sup> she wrote. Lack of funds did not allow her to take her girls to historic places like Puri and Bhubaneswar, Chitor and Benares, Ujjain and Rajgir, Elephanta and Conjeevaram. But she made up that deficiency to some extent by taking them on short trips to places such as the Calcutta zoo and museum and Dakshineswar. The educational value of such trips would be obvious from what she told her pupils during a moment of crisis on one of such trips. They were all going by boat which rolled on one side as the river was rough. The girls were very much afraid when Nivedita

18. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 5, p. 20.

19. *Atmaprana, Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1961) p. 231.

20. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 5, p. 26.

21. *Atmaprana, Sister Nivedita*, p. 231.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 232.

23. *Atmaprana, My India, My People* (New Delhi: Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, 1985), p. 31.

24. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 5, p. 26.

said : 'Why are you afraid ? Don't fear the big waves. Good boatmen remain firm at the helm and go over the waves safely. If in our lives we too learn to remain steadfast, then we will have no fear in life—never.'<sup>25</sup> It is this Upanisadic message of fearlessness, strength, courage and steadfastness in goal that her Master preached all his life and it is this message that Nivedita was seeking to make true to the life of her pupils.

'Straighten up your back, never crouch' was the advice she would give her students. Don't indulge in over-exuberance,<sup>26</sup> or be exhibitivite but be creative by all means. Anybody visiting her small room in the school could see Nivedita's room decorated with toys and painting made by her girls under her *creative* advice. She displayed these very proudly to all her visitors. On one such visit, Ananda Coomaraswamy, the great art connoisseur, praised a small *alpana* design drawn by one of Nivedita's pupils. At this, Nivedita was beside herself with joy. This shows the great emphasis Nivedita gave on developing the artistic talents of the students, her ultimate objective in this regard being the revival of ancient Indian art. She exclaimed : 'How happy will be that day when Sanskrit written on palm leaves by my girls will decorate my room'.

### III

The personal interest that Nivedita took in the day to day development of her pupils can be seen from the notes she kept of them. 'Here are two examples.'<sup>27</sup>

25. *Atmaprana, Sister Nivedita*, p. 231.

26. A great disciplinarian herself, Sister Nivedita once punished a girl student who indulged in blurting out the answers to question asked of other girls. See *Atmaprana, Sister Nivedita*, p. 230. She also made her students take regular physical exercise in the form of drill in the garden attached to her school.

27. See *Atmaprana, My India, My People*, Op. cit., pp. 28-29.

<sup>28</sup> Bidyutmalā Bose: Attended 45 times out of 60.<sup>28</sup> One of the strongest characters I have ever seen. Her courage and determination are wonderful. And she has exquisite taste. She was troublesome and disobedient till I had a quiet talk with her the other day—since then a smile has been enough. And the daintiest offerings have constantly arrived. She has fire and will enough for anything, but will be smothered in marriage<sup>29</sup> of course. Her sewing is particularly good.

M.N.: Attended 39 times out of 60. Such a good, sweet, quiet, painstaking child. One of the best, sweetest and cleverest children I have ever known. Most retiring and ceaselessly good. Easily lost in work.

The motherly care she took of her pupils was unparalleled. Her day at the school began with greeting the girls at the school gate, saying 'Ah ! my children have come, my children have come'.<sup>30</sup> This was no formal greeting. She meant it with all her heart. When Mahamaya, a girl-student of her, had tuberculosis, she who had been suffering privations herself, spared whatever she could from her meagre resources<sup>31</sup> to bear the medical expenses of the child and to find her a rented home at Puri so that she could be at peace in the last days of her life.

Giribala was a twenty-two-year-old widow with a child living in her uncle's house at Baghbazar. She started coming to school only to find herself criticized by her neighbours. Society being what it was at that time, such attitude born of orthodoxy was not unusual in those days. In the face of criticism she stopped coming. Nivedita not

28. Nivedita was very particular, almost fastidious about the regularity of attendances at the school.

29. One practice that Nivedita always regretted was the early marriage of Indian girls which left them little time and years to complete even their primary education. She was pained to see the early end to the studies of promising young girls.

30. *Atmaprana, Sister Nivedita*, p. 234.

31. *Ibid.*

only implored her uncle to send her to school but gave Giribala her own shawl so that she could come to the school covering herself with the shawl: 'My child, henceforward you will be able to attend the school regularly'.<sup>32</sup>

The most moving example is that of Prafullamukhi, a child-widow, and student of Nivedita. On Ekādaśī, the day of fast for Hindu widows, Nivedita used to send for her and give her fruits and sweets to eat. On one such day it so happened that after the day's work for the school Nivedita went to the house of Dr. J.C. Bose. The moment she remembered there that it was an Ekādaśī and that poor Prafullamukhi remained unfed for the whole day, she rushed back to her place and sent for Prafullamukhi, telling her with all the love of a mother: 'My child, my child, I quite forgot! How unjust of me: I did not give anything to you to eat but ate myself, how unthoughtful of me!'<sup>33</sup> It was this undiluted pure love of a mother that Nivedita extended to the

whole of India. It was the fullest extension of a woman's family ideal to the national ideal. The whole India was Nivedita's family. It was only in the fitness of the poetic vision of Rabindranath Tagore that he called Nivedita *Lokamata*. Can India ever repay the all-embracing love and selfless giving of this noble lady who was more Indian than any Indian could ever be and whose life was one long message on the urgent necessity of *national unity and national integration of India*? The italicized words in the last sentence represent the fundamental idea behind all her thoughts including thoughts on education. 'Be a nation. Think great of yourselves. Believe in your organic relatedness. Imagine a life in which all have common interests, common needs and mutually complementary duties'<sup>34</sup>: this was the message Sister Nivedita left behind—a message which is even more relevant for India of today than it was for India of the time she lived and worked for.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. See Nivedita's letter, dated 28 July 1904 to Mrs. Ole Bull, *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 2, p. 664.

## THE POEMS OF VIVEKANANDA

DR. CAREBANU COOPER

Swami Vivekananda, born in 1863, is well-known as a giant intellect, an outstanding writer of pragmatic, inspirational prose and poetry, an orator, and a patriotic Hindu, whose powerful message revolves around the ancient Vedantic axiom: *ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*—'Truth is one, wise men describe it in various ways'.

Vivekananda's teachings would have been difficult for the Western world to accept, had it not been for the 19th century Transcendental Movement in literature.

Having reverentially studied the Hindu Upanishadic philosophy, the poets of this movement accepted the immutable *Atman* or divine inner core amidst *samsāra* or the changing panorama of the outer world. The sense of infinite existence became a realized fact, and by means of his intuitive vision, Whitman, like Vivekananda, entered the spiritual centre within himself and discovered the true glory of his transcendental self. Vivekananda also, cognizing the infinity of existence, unleashed tremendous powers



within himself—powers he employed to help mankind emerge from the thralldom of *māyā*, or the delusion of dualities.

In his childhood Vivekananda developed a love of poetry that never left him. As a child he spent many hours listening to his mother's recitation of stirring tales from the ancient epics, and as a student, he came under the afflatus of the British Romantic poets. From a very early age, Vivekananda began writing poetry and composing songs, all of which reveal the imprint of his early spiritual inspirations. The soul became his persona, the 'Reflector true—Thy pulse so timed to mine,<sup>1</sup> that he constantly searched for the how and why of things, and not satisfied with stereotypic answers, Vivekananda formulated his own responses based upon his meditations. These answers were written in poetic form. Vivekananda's poetry was spontaneous, expressing the immediate emotion of a whole conscious experience.

Three broad themes run through Vivekananda's poetry. These are perceptions ostensibly disparate, yet inextricably interwoven. They represent Vivekananda's philosophy of life; and though his life appeared compartmentalized, it was unmistakably synthesized by his guru Ramakrishna's teachings of Unity and Oneness that stretched from the lowly worm to the heavenly *devas* (gods). These three broad motifs in Vivekananda's poetry are, the religious or metaphysical, the social or critical sentiments, and the poems of prophecy. His poems were written in Bengali and English, and like his oratory, reveal an authority of *jñāna* (Self-knowledge), and the elan of *bhakti* (zealous devotion to God). Vivekananda's reputation as a poet of note stemmed not so much from

his prosody, but from the covert implications interwoven into the poems. The strength of his verse lay in their spiritual strength and autobiographical nature, and could be termed (to use a Wordsworthian phrase) 'emotion recollected in tranquillity.'

Although very few of his poems are dated, the images Vivekananda used and the feelings he evoked are universal. Like the great philosophical poets, Milton and Whitman, Vivekananda used blank verse to convey his meaning. This form of poetry allowed him to attain an incredible range and flexibility in his verse.

From his earliest childhood Vivekananda had been attracted to and made a deep study of Hindu religion. He considered the Goddess Kālī<sup>2</sup> the primordial Power behind life and the universe to be his spiritual Mother, 'the One behind phenomena.'<sup>3</sup> 'Kālī the Mother,'<sup>4</sup> considered one of Vivekananda's better-known poems, was written under exceptional circumstances. According to his Eastern and Western disciples, Vivekananda composed the poem at a time when his

brain seethed with the vision and the consciousness of the Mother while his vision was intensest (sic), he wrote the poem 'Kālī, the Mother'. Filled with sublime consciousness, he wrote to the last word, the pen fell from his hand, he himself dropped to the floor losing consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

A striking parallel between this poem and Dante's *Inferno* emerges: Vivekananda's

2. Kālī, the dark-hued Hindu goddess of destruction, destroys those traits in man that hinder him from an awareness of his divinity. Thus Kālī is beneficial, by helping man to attain an ultimate union with Brahman or the Godhead.

3. *The life of Swami Vivekananda* by his Eastern and Western Disciples (Calcutta, India: Advaita Ashrama, 1960), p. 547.

4. 'Kālī, the Mother', *Complete Works*, (1972), Vol. 4, p. 384.

5. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, op. cit., p. 596.

1. Swami Vivekananda, 'To My Own Soul' *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977) Vol. 8, p. 170. (Hereafter referred to as *Complete Works*)

determination to 'see' Mother Kālī through the experiences of the terrible death reminds us of Dante's eagerness to meet his beloved Beatrice through the awe-striking journey of Inferno and Purgatorio. Dante's journey took him through the underworld and finally with the loud hosanna of a multitude of angels, to Beatrice in Paradiso. In this poem, however, the object of Vivekananda's passion was no human being but Kālī, the terrible face of Divine Mother. Vivekananda passed through *samādhi*<sup>6</sup> in which the vision of Kālī was revealed through the 'Sturm und Drang of the Cosmos.' In this poem, Vivekananda repeatedly used onomatopoeia to portray his agitation. He described the night as 'darkness vibrant', paralleling Milton's vision of 'darkness visible'. To Vivekananda, the occasional flash of 'lurid light' (as alliteration that gets lost in the imagery), revealed the 'roaring whirling wind ... [which] swirls up mountain-waves,/To reach the pitchy sky.'

The first line, 'The stars are blotted out', prepares us for the raging tempest that follows, a whirlwind of frenzied intoxication. The wild wind is personified as millions of lunatics, 'wrenching trees by the roots,/Sweeping all from the path.' Flashes of lightning reveal a tumultuous sea, with Death omnipresent. This Death is Mother Kālī, the All-Destroyer. Vivekananda's adoration of Kālī recalls the Psalmist who said: 'Though thou slay me, yet will I trust Thee.' (*Job*, 13 : 15). Vivekananda often told his disciples :

Learn to recognize the Mother as instinctively in ..terror, sorrow and annihilation as in that which

6. Superconscious experience in which the mind, attaining to the ultimate state of calmness and concentration, experiences communion with the Divine Reality. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in America, New Discoveries* (Calcutta, India: Advaita Ashrama, 1966), p. 709.

7. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, op. cit., p. 596.

makes for sweetness and joy... The Mother Herself is Brahman... The heart must become a cremation-ground, pride, selfishness, and desire all burnt to ashes. Then, and then alone, will the Mother come!<sup>8</sup>

After twenty-one years of affluent living, Vivekananda suffered the deprivation of his father's death and experienced the Sturm und Drang of life. It was then that his spiritual quest began to take a new turn. The misery and terror of his privation were the 'cremation-ground' whereupon his last tinge of ego was 'burnt to ashes', and through his sorrow, like the phoenix, Vivekananda achieved a spirit of renewal. He learned to recognize the Mother in terror and grief, and to 'Dance in Destruction's Dance.' This then was the end of the storm which had been heralded by the first line of the poem : 'The stars are blotted out.' Now, calm ensued, and the last line antithetical to the first, 'To him the Mother comes', falls upon Vivekananda and the reader like a benediction.

The metaphysical poem 'The Cup'<sup>9</sup> reinforces the oral nature of Vivekananda's mission. Like Christ and Socrates, Vivekananda communicated his messages in spoken rather than written words—which was to awaken mankind to cognizing his divine potential as one with the inscrutable Divinity. 'The Cup' is written as an apologue in which the Divine, as the pedagogue, enlightens a devotee on the reason for his harsh life, and how he could counteract such inclemency. Here Vivekananda employs a familiar biblical allusion to symbolize the unfathomable suffering mankind endures. Like Christ who prayed in his garden agony, 'Let this cup pass from me', the devotee also questions the tribulations of his life.

A repetitive use of the words 'My child' emphasizes the relationship between teacher

8. *Ibid.*, p. 597.

9. 'The Cup', *Complete Works*, (1972), Vol. 6, p. 177.



and taught, and the anaphora at the beginning of each of the three verses, has a premonitory ring to it :

This is your cup ..  
This is your road...  
This is your task..

This call is reminiscent of Vivekananda's relationship with Ramakrishna, who often had to remind the reluctant youth of his worldly duties. The first stanza reveals a Karmic<sup>10</sup> matrix that had been formulated early in the devotee's life, and an explication of this pattern is given in the second and third stanzas.

The devotee's karma of 'fault and passion, ages long ago' had chartered 'a painful road and dream' which he was forced to travel. While the problems ('stones') sent as tests from the Divine gave him no ease, another way could not be taken, as this was the allotted path for the devotee to traverse. While his work also gave him no joy or aesthetic satisfaction, it was a task meant for him alone, and as such, had a special place in the Divine plan. This alludes to Vivekananda's life and the period following his father's death. Vivekananda had been forced to spend long hours in uncongenial, mundane work in order to provide for his family, and puzzled at finding himself in such straits, he often railed against his destiny. But Vivekananda's loving faith in the Divine restored his equilibrium, and like Rabbi Ben Ezra of Robert Browning, Vivekananda acquiesced : 'My times be in Thy hand !/ Perfect the cup as planned.' The poem ends on a paternal note. The devotee is told (as Vivekananda had often been told by his guru, Ramakrishna), that he should make no attempt to comprehend the seeming-caprice of life ; instead he was urged to cease his investigation of the profane world,

10. A concept according to Hindu, Buddhist and Jain, that all actions have inevitable moral consequences in this life or the next: preordained fate.

and concentrate on seeking Divine grace.

Vivekananda creates an artistic personification of the concept of 'Nirvāṇa',<sup>11</sup> an idea Vivekananda affirms to be a reality in this Vedantic poem whose tone suggests the Hallelujah chorus. 'Nirvāṇaśatkaṃ or Six Stanzas on Nirvāṇa',<sup>12</sup> was written by Śaṅkarācārya<sup>13</sup> in Sanskrit, and Vivekananda translated it into English. Though a poem that is taken out of one language and translated into another usually suffers great loss, or as the Chinese proverb states, 'A translation is the reverse side of the brocade', this is not the case with Vivekananda's 'Nirvāṇaśatkaṃ.'

Vivekananda, a master of both Sanskrit and English gave the literary ballade, 'Nirvāṇaśatkaṃ', a striking vocabulary. His years as a *parivrājaka* (itinerant monk), and later as an *ācārya* (teacher), are reflected in his elucidation of the unanswerable question : What is Nirvāṇa ? Each verse begins with the personified Nirvāṇa stating what it is not. The penultimate line is the resounding climax, intensified by a reversion in the usual order of sentence structure : 'I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute.' In the last line (the resolution), the riddle is solved when the individual who has already realized the state of perfect detachment from body and mind, of perfect desirelessness declares that he himself is Śiva, 'Śivoham, Śivoham' (the Absolute God).

The pattern of rising tone developing to a climax, then falling to a resolution, is repeated in the five stanzas. The first verse is built on the structure of a ballade :

I am neither the mind, nor the intellect, nor the Ego, nor the mind-stuff ;

11. The final absorption in Brahman, or the All-Pervading Reality, through the annihilation of the individual ego.

12. 'Nirvanashatkaṃ', *Complete Works* (1972) Vol. 4, pp. 391-92.

13. Eight-century Hindu philosopher,

I am neither the body, nor the changes in the body;  
 I am neither the senses of hearing, taste, smell, or sight,  
 Nor am I the ether, the earth, the fire, the air;  
 I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute—  
 I am He, I am He. (Śivoham, Śivoham)<sup>14</sup>

In the first verse, Nirvāṇa had declared that it was not a composite of physical traits like the body or its senses, neither emotional or moral values, nor was it limited by the time sequence of death, or man-made limitations of caste, region or nationality. The repeated words 'I am neither ...' arouses the reader's curiosity as to what Nirvāṇa is, as opposed to the repeated statements of what it is not. What the blessed state of Nirvāṇa represents is revealed through the refrain of the last two lines in each stanza which commences with 'I am ...' The last verse completely explicates the realization of Nirvāṇa as formless and limitless beyond space and time. Nirvāṇa is the feeling of one's existence everywhere. It is represented by 'Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute', or 'Sat, Cit, Ānanda', which, according to Hindu philosophy, represents man's highest level of spiritual development. Thus, the ecstasy of Nirvāṇa culminates in one's identification with Śiva, the Absolute God. Vivekananda accepted this interpretation of Nirvāṇa and it represented the culmination of his personal revelations after intense *tapasyas* (austerities).

Many of Vivekananda's disciples consider 'To the Fourth of July'<sup>15</sup> prophetic in tone. It was written on the fourth of July 1898, and four years later on that very day, July 4, 1902, with 'springing joy' and 'life renewed', Vivekananda's 'shackles' of work

and responsibilities were 'broken', and he attained the Nirvāṇa he had been seeking all his life. This poem not only reveals the poetic skill of Vivekananda the versifier, but more importantly, the ardour and human traits of Vivekananda the seer.

July 1898, found Vivekananda in Kashmir, and on the fourth of the month, he planned a surprise celebration for his American friends. He had a tailor make a replica of the American flag, and together with branches of evergreen, it was nailed to the prow of the dining room boat, where a tea had been arranged. Vivekananda's special contribution to the merriment was the gift of his poem 'To the Fourth of July.' The intense yearning for 'liberty and freedom'—the central themes of the poem—so overcame Vivekananda, that immediately after that he made a trip to the famous shrine of Śiva at Amarnath. It was difficult but spiritually enlightening for the summer sun had melted the ice, causing land slides and impassable roads. From that time onwards, Vivekananda developed a brooding introspection, and confided, 'I am attaining peace that passeth understanding, which is neither joy nor sorrow, but something above them both.'<sup>16</sup> In a poignant letter to his disciple Nivedita, he confessed, 'I don't want to work. I want to be quiet and rest ... but fate or Karma, I think, drives me on—work, work.'<sup>17</sup>

It is not the actual fourth of July that is portrayed, but a blending of concrete and abstract responses to a national event (freedom from oppressive rule), and to eternal concepts (liberty from the chains of Maya, delusion). The metaphorical conception of freedom is portrayed as twin-faceted: one, representing the American nation, and the other symbolically predicting the freedom that awaited Vivekananda four years later.

The poem is written in blank verse,

14. I am Shiva, the Absolute God—a mantra used in the practice of monistic Vedānta.

15. 'To the Fourth of July', *Complete Works* (1973) Vol. 5, p. 439.

16. *Complete Works* (1977) Vol. 8, p. 504.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 413.

Vivekananda's favoured style of prosody, and represents a near-perfect integration of image and idea with symbol and thought. The poem opens with the same foreboding images that characterize 'Hold on Yet a While Brave Heart': 'dark clouds ... gloomy pall', but a 'magic touch' transforms them into the jocund illustration of 'high noon ... shackles broken ... in springing joy their life renewed!' This 'magic touch' as a symbol for Spring, 'awakens ... the world to a "new life" of love and freedom', while the Sun, 'Lord of Light' emerges from behind the 'gloomy pall' of dark clouds, recalling the similar image of hope and triumph which dominates the poem 'Hold on Yet a While Brave Heart.'

Vivekananda commented upon America's search for freedom. Being 'self-banished', renouncing home and love of friends, the early settlers toiled with untold misery, 'Each step a struggle for their life or death', until 'today' (July 4, 1776), when they attained Liberty. This dovetails with Vivekananda's search for *mukti*, liberation. After arduous *tapasyas*, austerities, especially during his *parivrajaka* days as an itinerant monk, Vivekananda attained his goal. The last stanza bursts into joyful prayer for man's release from bondage. The metaphor 'high noon' represents light and knowledge, and Vivekananda's desire was that this 'light' spread all over the world, releasing the imprisoned souls from their limitations (physical and mental), and thus renewing life. Vivekananda's shackles were the constraints set by Maya, and on their removal, he felt he was ready for the ultimate Nirvāṇa and a new life. To Josephine MacLeod, a disciple, Vivekananda confided:

The battles are lost and won. I have bundled my things and am waiting for the great deliverer. Shiva, O Shiva, carry my boat to the other shore.<sup>18</sup>

18. *Ibid.*, p. 422.

Vivekananda, a poet of cosmic consciousness, possessed an all-embracing vision, enabling him to see 'a world in a grain of sand'. His never-ending presentation was the doctrine of the self as *atman-brahman* (self-Divine Self), or, 'I am He, I am He, Shivoham. Shivoham.' Vivekananda's apocalyptic vision had its roots in the prayer from the *Kāṭha Upaniṣad*, 'From the unreal lead me to the real, from darkness lead me to light, from death lead me to immortality.'<sup>19</sup> Hence in his poem 'The Living God', Vivekananda was able to write with confidence, 'Him worship, the only visible! / Break all other idols!' Vivekananda's search for *amṛtātva*, immortality, led him to look within himself, and beneath the many ego-phantoms, to find the 'Paramātmān', or real basis of all existence.

This poet of the cosmos had gained his release from delusion by a withdrawal from *saṁsāra*, panorama of the world, for as he stated in 'The Song of the Sannyasin', 'fetters though of gold, are no less strong to bind.' Vivekananda's knowledge of the world convinced him of the limiting range of all earthly achievements with its frustration of 'ever running, never reaching' the goal. His credo as a sannyasin was to renounce the unstable for the eternal truth, namely, the self, and his constant prophetic refrain was, 'He conquers all who conquers self'

Vivekananda is primarily a lyric poet. He perfected his own method of infusing intensity and complexity into his verse by various means, a favourite technique being the repetition of symbols with varying meaning:

... stones and trees ne'er break the law,  
But stones and trees remain; that man alone  
Is blest with power to fight and conquer fate  
Transcending bounds and laws.<sup>20</sup>

19. *Kāṭha Upaniṣad*, 4.1.

20. 'Angels Unaware', *Complete Works* (1972) Vol. 4, p. 385.

Like Keats' sensuous power, Vivekananda's gift of visualization arouses a sensory impression associated with feeling, hearing, smelling, seeing, which illuminates the meaning of the poem. We see and hear the agony in 'The Song of the Free':

The wounded snake its hood unfurls,  
The flame stirred up doth blaze,  
The desert air resounds the calls  
Of heart-struck lion's rage.<sup>21</sup>

We smell the fragrance of the

. . .violet, sweet and pure,  
But ever pour thy sweet perfume  
Unashed! unstunted, sure!<sup>22</sup>

Vivekananda's verses like those of the Transcendentalists, had a healing power, a soothing tone not entirely sad or entirely joyous. It is an inner happiness that remembers sorrow, that is familiar with a resilience which will not allow it to be cast down. A vignette of the pleasure-seeker in 'Angels Unaware' reveals the tone of this special bitter-sweet healing:

One drunk with wine of wealth and power  
And health to enjoy them both, whirled on  
His maddening course, till the earth, he thought,  
Was made for him, his pleasure-garden. . .  
Then sorrow came—and Wealth and Power went—  
And made him kinship find with all the human race  
In groans and tears, and though his friends would laugh,  
His lips would speak in grateful accents—  
'O Blessed Miscry!'<sup>23</sup>

Vivekananda was the master of many poetic styles. Among them the ballade form with its haunting refrain akin to a mantra,

21. 'An Interesting Correspondence', *Complete Works* (1977) Vol. 8, p. 163.

22. 'To An Early Violet', *Complete Works* (1977), Vol. 8, p. 169.

23. 'Angels Unaware', *Complete Works* (1972), Vol. 4, p. 385.

'I am He, I am He, Śivoham, Śivoham.'<sup>24</sup> His metrical technique resembles an important form of the classical music of India, the Rāga.<sup>25</sup> This is a melodic framework from which the virtuoso projects his most profound sentiments, through improvisations. Like a ballade it repeats the same motifs, with variations on the predominant melody. This technique of repetition and variation characterizes Vivekananda's verse and is clearly seen in his celebrated poem 'Song of the Sannyasin' composed at Thousand Island Park. In the poem 'The Cup', the predominant theme (melody) is 'Life', while symbols and metaphors (variations) intensifies the experience of living. Variants of the main theme are portrayed in the first four words of each of the three stanzas—'This is your cup...', a metaphor for life—and is explicated in the first verse, 'dark drink...of fault and passion', introducing a colourful timbre. The second verse employs a variant of the main theme—'This is your road...' which, the devotee 'must travel' despite it being painful and drear. Verse three has yet another variant of the theme of life—'This is your task...' The poet urges the devotee to accept that particular life for only by total acceptance can he be assured of Divine grace. Vivekananda's love and knowledge of music is subtly revealed in this Rāga-like poem, which could easily be termed 'Life or the Autobiography of the Soul.'

In Vivekananda's poetry, every verse is undergirded with the concepts of Brahman, the Divine Essence from which all creation emanates. The themes of man's freedom, strength, fearlessness and self-confidence radiate from man's realization of this Divine Essence within himself. Vivekananda's poetry is not verse for an hour,

24. 'Nirvanashatkam', *Complete Works* (1972), Vol. 4, p. 391.

25. The melodic basis of Indian classical music on which musicians improvise,

but concepts for all times. The combination of intellect and emotion, with their appropriate styles, arrests one's attention, a gift graphically illustrated by Ramakrishna :

As the snake remains spellbound with its hood

up on hearing the sweet music of the flute, so does He who is in the heart, the Antaryāmi, when Naren [Vivekananda] sings!<sup>26</sup>

26. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, op. cit., p. 163.

## THOUGHTS ON NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN PRE-INDEPENDENT INDIA

DR. AROOP CHAKRAVARTI

In the previous centuries we had a limited vision of India in a climate of fear, suspicion, intolerance and misunderstanding. India with its mighty mountains, great rivers and vast plains was, 'a continent rather than a country'. This vast land was divided into various provinces, inhabited by different cultures. It could not boast of a single Nation. When our nationalist leaders came to the forefront of our freedom struggle, they too realized that this concept of nationalism as well as the idea of nationality were to be inculcated into the minds of the people. Without this spirit of nationhood, it would have been impossible to get rid of the bondage of foreign domination.

Among the leaders who at first spelt out the theory of nationality were the famous trio of India's freedom struggle, 'Lal, Bal, Pal', representing Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal respectively. They alongwith Aurobindo Ghosh and other leaders tried to inculcate the spirit of nationalism into the minds of our people. They propagated the idea Nationality, Nationalism and National Education.

Preaching the ideals of Nationalism through National Education, Tilak maintained that the National Movement should have a common language for the whole of

India. This was absolutely necessary, because, a common language is a vital element for the growth of nationalism.<sup>1</sup> Quoting Manu in support of his views, Tilak writes, 'Manu rightly says that everything is comprehended or proceeded from Vak or Language'.<sup>2</sup> Tilak rightly viewed that if we want to draw a nation together there is no other force more powerful than a common language for all. Tilak was one of the few men of his age to have given a thought to the linguistic problems of this vast country. Furthermore, Tilak expressed concern over the way the British Government was going ahead with its educational policy. He opined that national education was that education which gave a clear idea of the knowledge and experiences of our ancestors. He gave instances as to how our prosperous industries were taken away and yet we remained ignorant of the immense damage.<sup>3</sup>

Remedy to all such flagrant acts of exploitation lay in National Education, an education which would be totally on national lines and in keeping with the vital interests of the people of the country. Lala Lajpat Rai too opined that, 'National

1. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *Writings and Speeches* (Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1919) p. 27.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Education must be provided by the nation, and whether the State is a true representative of the nation or not, it must be made to provide for it. The nation should be made conscious of this'. Bipin Chandra Pal also went deep into the development of National Education. He said that the educational policy enunciated by Lord Curzon was motivated to appease the graduates, who would ever remain loyal to the foreign Government in their own country.<sup>4</sup> This movement of National Education, as Pal maintained, was people's reply to the official policy.

Throwing light on the movement of National Education, Lajpat Rai tells us that no scheme of national education would be complete in India without including an active teaching of 'Patriotism' and 'Nationalism' as a regular subject of study. In this connection he cited the examples of the European countries as well as the United States and how they made it a point to cultivate the spirit of patriotism and nationalism through their schools. However, Lajpat Rai cautioned his countrymen that there should be no divergent tendencies in this field because of the fact that India is dominated by so many religions and castes. Therefore, he suggested that the teaching of patriotism in India and its place in the scheme for national education must revolve round mainly our love for India, regardless of the various creeds and castes into which it is internally divided.

Regarding the National Educational Movement in Bengal, Lajpat Rai observed that it was in no way an anti-Government movement though it owed its initiation to the threats of Government.<sup>5</sup> Aurobindo Ghosh too along with Bipin Chandra Pal eloquently advocated the idea of national

education. For the development of this noble idea, they had set up a National Council of Education. The purpose of this council was to take up the cause of national education in right earnest. It practically reduced English to the status of a secondary language.

Our Nationalist leaders always worked for a unified progress of the national movement. They always wanted that all the communities should shrink their differences and move onwards with the common aim of nationalism. Bipin Chandra Pal rightly tells us that 'the original models of the different races that have come together in modern India must be kept always vividly in view by the Indian nation-builders'<sup>6</sup>. The five world cultures those of Hindu, Parsee, Christian, Muslim and Buddhist, which have existed together in India have special characteristics of their own. Furthermore, Pal aptly points out that, 'It would be worse than unwise to try to obliterate and reduce them all to a colourless unanimity'<sup>7</sup>. The working together of the different forces would pave the way for the development of the national consciousness, which alone could secure for this country a rightful place among the nations of the world.<sup>8</sup> At the same time Pal cautions us that none of the great world cultures should try to superimpose its own ideals and methods upon other cultures.<sup>9</sup> It was the basic unity which, as Pal rightly observes, 'while maintaining the elements of diversity and differentiation intact makes cooperation possible in this work of nation-building, between the leaders of the different communities'<sup>10</sup>.

Tilak during the course of one of his speeches pointed out how there has been

4. Bipin Chandra Pal, *Character Sketches* (Calcutta: Yugayatri Prakashak, 1957) p. 89.

5. Lajpat Rai, *Young India* (New Delhi: Publications Division) p. 148.

6. Bipin Chandra Pal, *Writings and Speeches* (Calcutta: Yugayatri Prakashak, 1957) Vol. 1, p. 32.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid. p. 33.

perfect harmony in India among different sects of people. He said that the fact that so many associations were doing him honour showed that all the people had joined hands together for the great National Work of Home Rule or Swarajya. Commenting on the problem of communal harmony, Lajpat Rai said that the teaching of Hindu-Muslim unity could be greatly facilitated by the writing of special and carefully worded works on the life and teachings of our great national heroes. Similar to Bipin Pal's Composite Patriotism, Lajpat Rai too said that there should be a composite production of patriotic and scientific history. Lajpat Rai rightly observed in the context of communal harmony and national integration that, 'If mother India is proud of a Nanak, she is also proud of a Chisti. If she had an Asoka, she had a Akbar too'. He further cautioned us that diversity of race, religion and language is often exploited by the foreigners as a pretext to deny us the status and privilege of a nation. According to Lajpat Rai there is no conflict of races in India and furthermore, 'there is no country on the face of the globe which has a pure race'.

Bipin Chandra Pal with his idea of Composite Patriotism tried to bridge the gulf between two major sectors of our societies, that is the Hindus and the Muslims. Bipin Chandra's concept of Composite Patriotism had a wide range of implications especially in a country like India where various cultures and religions move together.

Bipin Pal rightly observed that if a single community or religion is given a place of stewardship, it would hamper the healthy growth of nationalism. Therefore, the only way to solve the issue was to encourage the growth of Composite Patriotism.

Bipin Chandra Pal, further throwing light upon the idea of Composite Patriotism and Composite Cultures, tells us that this Composite Culture could very much help in the formation of a basic unity. This basic unity between the leaders of different communities of these great world cultures could be maintained along with their elements of diversity and differentiation intact.<sup>11</sup> Both the Hindus as well as the Muslims according to Pal, should assist in the realization of the national ideal without subjugating their own special features. Thus Bipin Chandra's Composite Patriotism could have been a possible alternative to the two nation theory of the Muslim League.

Thus we find that the nationalist leaders had a vision of national integration not only by political arrangements, but by an understanding of the cultures of the different peoples. These leaders had always kept before them the ideal of oneness. They knew that India is a country where there is unity in diversity and therefore, they always thought that any movement in India should be an integrated national movement and this would be the basis of a complete national integration.

11. Ibid.



# CONCEPT OF NATURE IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

DR. D. NIRMALA DEVI

While describing the nature of God, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* has incidentally described the nature of the world. 'Nature in her perplexing multiplicity is God, becomes finite, and relative without losing as much as an iota of His absoluteness or wholeness.'<sup>1</sup> According to the *Gītā* the world has sprung up from God, lives in Him and is to be finally dissolved in Him. God is the origin, the end and the resting place of the world. God who is also known as *Puruṣa* created it through His *prakṛti*. In chapter 13, the idea is further explained: 'Know thou that *prakṛti* (nature) and *puruṣa* (Soul) are both beginningless; and know also that the forms and modes are born of *prakṛti* (nature).'<sup>2</sup>

God, again, is to be regarded as imperishable—*akṣara*. In some places, the *Gītā* is also found to maintain that God is unmanifested (*avyakta*) for the reason that He represents the quality of subjectivity which cannot form part of the manifested world of objectivity. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* tells us that God is not merely the Absolute or Brahman. The Brahman is a pure ontological potency, as such, it is beyond the unmanifest. 'But beyond this unmanifested, there is yet another Unmanifested Eternal Being who does not perish even when all existences perish.'<sup>3</sup> It is the Supra-cosmic unmanifested which is changeless and eternal in the midst of all changes. Two types of unmanifested are sometimes distinguished. An unmanifested (*avyakta*) into which all unredeemed beings enter. The next is the supra-cosmic *avyakta*. It is

imperceptible to the ordinary mind.

*Puruṣa* builds this universe through His *prakṛti*. *Prakṛti* is the primordial matrix out of which all material and psychic phenomena evolve. The world has also been likened by the *Gita* to an *Aśvattha*,<sup>4</sup> the peepal tree, which has its root above and branches below, indicating its origin in God. The three *guṇas*, i.e. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* nourish its branches. Its foliage are the different objects of sense perception. This tree, like the banyan, has sent its roots below in the world of men, which becomes the spring of their actions. These deep roots of attachment to the objects in the world have become firm there, and have pinned human beings to this world. As this world is *anitya*, evanescent, and *asukha*, full of misery, the *Gita* exhorts people to cut down these firm roots with the strong sword of detachment and carry on the search for God. About the nature of the world there has long been a controversy as to whether it is to be regarded as real or unreal. The Lord's *prakṛti* is His Nature. His Nature is two-fold—the lower, *aparā* and *parā*, the higher.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind and understanding and Self-sense—this is the eight-fold division of My nature. This is My lower nature. Know My other and higher nature which is the soul, by which this world is upheld, O mighty-armed (Arjuna). Know that all beings have their birth in this. I am the origin of all this world and its dissolution as well. I am the pure fragrance in earth and brightness in fire. I am the life in all existences and the austerity in ascetics.'<sup>5</sup>

1. George Feuerstein, *Introduction to the Bhagavad-Gita* (London: Rider & Co., 1976) p. 97.

2. Radhakrishnan, S., *The Bhagavad-Gita* (Bombay: Blackie & Son Ltd., 1976) p. 308.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 327.

5. *Ibid.*, Ch. VII. 4,5,6,9. p. 216.



### *Maya and the world of change*

According to the Gita the changing world is an illusion. Maya stands as the principle of change. Dr. Radhakrishnan says that if the fundamental form of the supreme is *nirguṇa* or qualityless, and *acintya* or inconceivable, we can say that the world is an appearance which cannot be logically related to the Absolute. 'In the unalterable eternity of Brahman all that moves and evolves is founded. By It they exist; they cannot be without It, though It causes nothing, does nothing, determines nothing. While the world is dependent on Brahman, the latter is not dependent on the world.'<sup>6</sup> The relation between the Reality and the world are brought out by the word Maya. Maya is derived from the root *ma* 'to form', 'to build'. It originally meant the capacity to produce forms.

Maya has been used in different senses. Isvara is the meeting point of immutable and mutable principles. Maya is the principle of change and mutation. It is the eternal becoming and it depends on Isvara. God fashions the universe by His creative power. Sometimes Maya is said to be the source of delusion (*moha*). 'Deluded by these three-fold modes of nature (*guṇa*), this whole world does not recognize Me, who am above them and imperishable'.<sup>7</sup> By the force of Maya we have partial consciousness which loses sight of the ultimate Reality and lives in the world of phenomena. Thus, we are under the sway of this partial consciousness and God's real being is veiled from us by the play of *prakṛti* and its modes. We must shatter all forms and go behind the veil in order to find the Reality.

In the *Bhagavad-Gītā* the word Maya is used in different senses: '(1) Śrī Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna that He is both the being

and non-being. 'I give heat; I withhold and send forth the rain. I am immortality and also death, I am being as well as non-being O Arjuna.'<sup>8</sup> (2) Maya has, again, the sense of denoting lower *prakṛti*, in which God casts the seeds of creation. Puruṣa is said to be the seed which the Lord casts into the womb of Prakṛti for the generation of the world. 'The birth of all beings follows this combination of matter and spirit. Of all the bodies that take birth from different wombs, this primordial matter is the mother and the supreme Lord is the procreating father.'<sup>9</sup>

The action of Nature is cyclic. When at rest, it is called the 'unmanifest'. When it starts to move, diversity appears. The whole process is being likened to a day and night of the creator God, Brahma. At the day's dawning all things manifest, spring forth from the unmanifest and then at night-fall they dissolve (again) in the same thing called 'unmanifest'. As the manifested world hides the real from the vision of mortals, it is said to be delusive in character.<sup>10</sup>

### *Cosmology*

The Gita accepts from the Sāṃkhya its cosmology. The cosmic order is evolved out of *prakṛti*. In the Gita, Sāṃkhya is given the pride of place. While holding up Bhṛgu as the greatest ṛṣi (sage) the Gita declared Kapila, the founder of the Sāṃkhya school of thought, to be the most outstanding *siddha* (seer). Both the Sāṃkhya and the Gita hold that there are twenty-four elements involved in the cosmic evolution.

The whole cosmic process, according to the Gita, is the supreme God's working. He works on *prakṛti* which is conceived as

8. Ibid., Ch. IX. 19., p. 246.

9. Ibid., XIV:3,4. pp. 315-16.

10. Ibid., *Sandilya Sutra*, Ch. VII:25,14, pp. 223,218.

6. Ibid., 'Introductory Essay', pp. 37-38.

7. Ibid., p. 41.

a positive entity because it has the power of resistance. The Gita emphasizes the immanence of *Īvara*. *Īvara* embraces the world of finite souls and nature.

With regard to the *puruṣa*, the Gita declares that he is the knower of the field (*kṣetrajñā*), while *prakṛti* comprises the total range of objects that fall within the purview of knowledge. The Gita establishes only an epistemological relation between the two. One is the knower and the other is the known. *Prakṛti* is matter and *puruṣa*, consciousness. They are the lower nature and higher nature of *Isvara*.

The first and the most important point of difference between the two classifications, those of Sāṃkhya and the Gita, consists in the status assigned to the *puruṣa*. In the classical Sāṃkhya, the *puruṣa* has absolutely nothing to do with *prakṛti*. It is absolutely independent of the *prakṛti*. The two are disparate in their character. They represent two different metaphysical realities altogether. In the Gita we cannot see any such metaphysical character in *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. This is obvious from the fact that the *puruṣa* is called by the Gita as *parā-prakṛti*. It is the subtlest aspect of the *prakṛti*. All the other elements which are twenty-four in number are the constituents of *prakṛti* which is different from *parā-prakṛti*.

According to Sāṃkhya, *prakṛti* is composed of the three fundamental qualities of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. These *guṇas* did not exist independently of *prakṛti*. At the beginning of the third chapter of the Gita we are reminded of one thing that 'Every man is powerless and made to work by the constituents born of Nature'.<sup>11</sup> The *guṇas* are of the nature of joy, joylessness and dejection and have the purpose of illuminating, activating and restricting. They are interdependent and yet productive and cooperative in their

activities. 'As in Sāṃkhya, in the Gita also we can see the three constituents of nature i.e. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, 'goodness' or purity, 'passion' or energy and 'darkness' or 'dullness' or sloth.

There is no entity (*Sattva*) on earth or again among the gods in heaven who is free from these (type of) primary constituents (*guṇas*) born of the world ground.<sup>12</sup> The *guṇas* constitute the entire manifest world. They are the irreducible ultimate foundation of the physical cosmos. These constituents also unite for all mental and psychic phenomena. The meaning of the word, *guṇa* is 'strand' or rope. All these show their cohesive function. In the Gita their nature and modes of manifestation are more clear and exhaustive. In Sāṃkhya we cannot see such clarity. The idea of three strands can be clearly seen in the Vedic times also. This can be illustrated by a hymn of the *Atharva-Veda*: 'A lotus with nine gates enveloped by three strands—in it is a being strange, possessed of self. That (it is that) knowers of Brahman know.'<sup>13</sup>

The same idea we come across in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (6.4.1) also. All beings are apportioned between fire, water and food (solid matter). They represent the colours red, white and black. The world-phenomena consist of many things and these things are reducible to three basic qualities. The 'red' of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* corresponds to the 'passion' or energy of the Gita and of the Sāṃkhya, the white to 'goodness' or purity, and the black to 'darkness', 'dullness' or 'sloth'. Goodness helps us to release the self from matter. Passion is an instinct with purposeful activity. Darkness induces stupor, sloth and deadly activity. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is understandably more concerned about the working of the *guṇas* with respect to the inner world. According to George Feuerstein 'Sattva

11. Ibid., III:5, p. 133.

12. Ibid., XVIII:40, p. 364.

13. *Atharva-Veda*, 10.8.43.

reflects most faithfully the condition of the One Being (Sat); Tamas, on the other hand, is that power which obstructs the pure ascending tendency of *Sattva*. It has a fixing, condensing, "materialising" and externalising effect. And finally, *rajas* embodies the principle of activity which mediates between the "idealistic lucidity" of *Sattva* and "materialistic obscurity" of *tamas*.<sup>14</sup> In all the spheres of life we can see how these three work in all. In the Gita this idea becomes clear from the verses 14.5, 19 and 17.22 and 18.39. With reference to these *guṇas*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: 'Know that (all) states of being, whether they be goodness, passion or darkness, proceed from Me, but I am not in them, they are in Me. By these three states of being inhering in the constituents, this whole universe is led astray and does not understand that I am far beyond them, and that

I never change nor pass away. For (all) this is my creative (and deceptive) power (*māyā*) composed of the constituents, divine, hard to transcend'.<sup>15</sup>

The Gita does not enter into the details of evolution. All the cosmic elements of Sāṅkhya can be found in the Gita also, and the evolution series is the same. *Avyakta* or *prakṛti* is the originative cause. *Prakṛti* has its transformation into *buddhi*; *buddhi* into *ahamkāra* and *ahamkāra* into *manas*, the five senses<sup>16</sup> and the five organs of activity and the five *tanmātras*. Nothing new has been added to the Sāṅkhya scheme. The equilibrium of *prakṛti* is disturbed by the infusion of spirit. This infusion disturbs the equilibrium and evolution begins, giving rise to multifarious dimensions of Nature including man and his mind.

14. George Feuerstein, *Introduction to the Bhagavad Gita*, op. cit. pp. 103-04.

15. Radhakrishnan. S, *The Bhagavad Gita*, op. cit. pp. 216-18.

16. Ibid., p. 330.

## THE CONQUEST

(A One-act Play)

BODHISATTVA

**Characters:** Ashoka: the king of Magadha

Minister  
General  
1st Soldier  
2nd Soldier

Upagupta: A Buddhist monk

**Scene:** Inside a war-tent through which a side of the battle-field of Kalinga is seen on the screen at the backstage.

**Time:** Evening; red glow of the setting sun and battle-fire are seen in the evening sky.

## Act I

1st Soldier: Oh, what a terrible and deadly war! Fighting, fighting, fighting. Shelling, murder and killing. Oh, it is terrible! I have never seen such a powerful enemy as the Kalinga people. But (*enraged*) I tell you my dear comrade, victory is sure to come. We must have a crushing victory over the Kalingans.

2nd Soldier: And the victory is going to come right this evening.

1st Soldier: Is there any doubt about that? After all, our warrior king, the great fighter Ashoka, is the grandson of Chandragupta, the great.

2nd Soldier: And Chandragupta had left behind an unthinkable large army and we are irresistibly powerful today both on land and sea.

1st Soldier: That is it. Since the first day of our frontal attack on Kalinga the minister has been advising His Majesty to move his naval army through the sea path.

2nd Soldier: And King Ashoka has already ordered the movement of ships.

1st Soldier: But I don't think we will need the naval power. Our attack on land has been one of the largest and most horrible that history has ever seen. (*Softly*) Hark, here comes His Majesty and his general, and the minister. (*Suddenly looks in surprise through the wings*)

[*Enter Ashoka, General and the Minister*]

Ashoka: The dream has at last come true. The conquest of Kalinga was the dream of my grandfather Chandragupta. This was also the dream of my father, Bindusara. I myself was dreaming of this conquest since my childhood. General, Minister, and my soldiers! I congratulate you all on your effort in making it a success.

General: Your Majesty, I am afraid, the success is yet to come. We have to see the

last phase of the war. For the last two weeks our soldiers have been fighting valiantly for the capture of the Kalinga capital. And the Kalinga people have been giving an equally tough defence to protect their city.

Ashoka: General, do you think the Kalingans will be able to resist us? After all, since the days of Chandragupta, our soldiers have learnt to use the deadly weapons of Greek warfare. You know that we took them over from Selukas when he was forced to sign a treaty with my grand father.

General: That is true, but I am afraid the finish will be neither bloodless nor smooth.

Ashoka: General, what if the fields are flooded with enemies' blood? That matters little to Ashoka who murdered his own brothers and sisters in the dark dungeons of Pataliputra. Not a single cry was heard outside the dungeon walls. Everything was smooth and peaceful.

Minister: His Majesty's execution of plans is much wiser than His Majesty's grandfather's. Chandragupta murdered his relatives and the plot was leaked out. But General, look at the smooth ways of our King.

General: It is all true, Your Majesty. But the death-cries of the open war field are louder than the solitary cries in royal dungeons.

Ashoka: What do you mean General?

General: For five days, Your Majesty, the cries of the dying soldiers in the Kalinga fields have reached heaven. One million and fifty thousand Kalinga soldiers have so far been killed on the field. The Kalinga sky is now strewn with vultures coming to feast on human carcasses. And burnt branches stand on fields which were green with foliage even a week ago.

Ashoka: Why not bury the dead bodies in the proper military fashion?

General: Your Majesty, then we will have to bury the whole of Kalinga. It is impossible to bury or burn the bodies. Most of them are already half-burnt and mutilated. Some that are still living in the area are dying of thirst and hunger.

Ashoka: Why not ask the Kalinga civilians to come back and nurse the wounded ones?

General: There are no civilians in Kalinga.

Ashoka: Where are they gone?

General: They have either fled or are dead. We will have to listen to the terrible cries of the soldiers day and night for some weeks more. There is none to give them a last drop of water and bury the mutilated corpses.

Ashoka: General, do you mean to say that we have won only a vast cremation ground after this historic war?

General: Your Majesty, I am afraid, we have won a hell.

Ashoka: (*Turning to the audience*) I was dreaming of a land of beauty, of art, of painting. (*Suddenly turning to General violently*) General (*enraged*) I must go to the war field and see for myself. (*Pointing his finger to Minister*) Make all preparations for victory celebrations—music and hunting. After all, Kalinga is an exquisitely good place for hunting.

Minister: Your Majesty, all preparations for the victory celebration are ready. We are only waiting for the final order.

Ashoka: Very well, General, I shall myself see the last phase of the final battle and see that Kalinga war will be recorded as one of the greatest victories in all ages to come.

[*Exeunt Ashoka and his General*]

2nd Soldier: I think there is meaning in what our General says. I even shudder to think of our terrible army movement we have seen this morning.

1st Soldier: What? Do you believe our General? Victory is imminent, and King Ashoka has asked to kill any one of our enemies seen on the way.

2nd Soldier: What do you mean? Kill everyone seen on the way? That is certainly not the law of war.

Minister: Very true my dear soldier, but law is written only in books. The flames of war burn to ashes every single grass root of conscience grown in the human heart.

2nd Soldier: But will this mass killing of innocent children, helpless mothers and defeated soldiers bring us anything more than a murderous victory? Will not the cry of dying millions spoil our merry-making?

Minister: No, no, dear soldiers. The heart-rending cry of the parched millions will be the very music for us to feast upon this night. (*Turning to the 2nd soldier*) Why did you come to war with this womanish heart? Conscience is the eternal weakness of incapable hearts. And mark you, I have turned the King's mind completely free from the last pangs of these weaknesses which you call mercy. Kindness, softness, sympathy and love....Ha, Ha, (*enraged in excitement*) we will see that history records King Ashoka as the most terrible and ruthless fighter. The Kalinga war will put to shame all petty victories that have been and will be seen in future. Even the war-devastations of the mighty Alexander will be nothing compared to the terrible Kalinga war. Victory is imminent. We wish to wash our hands in the pools of enemy blood. Hey, soldier, go and see whether the king has come back.

[*1st Soldier leaves the stage*]

2nd Soldier: But Sir, I have seen King Ashoka even more intimately than his own relations. I have been working as the keeper of his tents for the last ten years.

I am afraid, he will not be able to like this terrible mirth.

Minister : Albeit, he will not only like it but will himself take part in the merry-making. Today and today itself we are going to lay foundations of the great Magadh empire on the tears of dying men and blooded fields of Kalinga. That was his Majesty's dream. That was our dream and the dream has come true. Let us prepare for the victory celebrations. Hey, .....where are you, .....music makers, trumpeters, singers, dancers ? Hey, get ready for the great victory evening. His Majesty and his general must be received with shouts of victory.

[ *Enters the 1st soldier gasping and sweating* ]

1st Soldier : Sir, victory is won. (*gasping*) His Majesty himself is coming back to the tents with his General. But Sir, thousands of dying soldiers of our enemy are crying to drink a few last drops of water. They are lying very near our war camps.

Minister : How does His Majesty feel about that ?

1st Soldier : His Majesty has been deeply struck. He is impatient, he is shaking. He is sweating, some unknown fear has come upon him. Our General is trying his best to comfort him, but Sir, Oh, how sad, he is disconsolate ; he is on the verge of tears. He is unwilling to leave the field and is standing in the midst of huge hills of dead bodies, even approaching the dying soldiers himself with a pitcher of water. Sir, let us rush to the field and beseech him to come to rest in the tent.

2nd Soldier : Hark, here comes His Majesty. Look ! He is a different man. Look he is tired and exhausted.

Minister : (*very very slowly*) He..... looks....pale. His face is changed ! (*The merry music goes on softly in the background*)

(*Ashoka enters with the General and waiters. The merry music grows slowly louder*).

Ashoka : Minister, General and soldiers, stop the music. (*Somebody rushes outside and the music slowly stops*).

No more of music. It must be a day of mourning. (*Everyone looks at each other and at the king*).

It must be an evening of silence. What music can there be when millions of springing life are forced to enter the dark burial of eternal oblivion ? Is this the promised land that I was dreaming of since my childhood-days in the Maurya palace ? Kalinga is no more a coveted kingdom, but a vast cremation ground that repels even the deadliest of men. All fighting is over. And with it all clashing of shields and dazzling of swords. (*Silence*) And with it is over all that we call life. Kalinga is now a vast dreadful kingdom of death and ghastly silence. No marching of cavalry, no chatting of babies, not even a sound of weeping from a loving wife or mother. (*Suddenly listens to some sound in the background*). What is that long moaning sound ?

Minister : Your Majesty that is the cry of vultures and dying soldiers.

General : Your Majesty is tired and exhausted. Your Majesty has led the entire war from the early morning, you must take rest and have peace.

Ashoka : What rest and peace can there be for one who has murdered the rest and peace of innocent millions, these calm and quiet Kalinga people. They used to graze their cattle in this beautiful fertile land, till their farms, had brought rich harvest home by their own hard toil. They are a race of painters, sculptors and poets. Ashoka has killed them all on a sudden, for no fault of their own. General, can Ashoka have rest any more ?

General : Your Majesty must have a little rest and sweet music.



Ashoka : Music ? Listen, General, listen to the music of cries still calling from the dark field. Do you hear ? (*The cry of vultures and dying soldiers is heard in the background*). Minister, when I murdered my own sisters and brothers, I never heard their crying. Is it their cry that I hear ?

Minister : Your Majesty, but we have victory, one of the greatest ever to be recorded in the pages of history.

Ashoka : Yes, victory it is, but not a victory of life and happiness. It is a victory of murderous ambition. It is a victory of death. If Kalinga war is a victory, then history will record King Ashoka as the terrible Ashoka. Is that the victory we hankered after ?

No, it is not a victory ; it is a defeat of peace ; it is a defeat of rest and life ; it is a defeat of humanity and Ashoka will have to bear the curse even for centuries. And this great disaster will only precipitate new disasters throughout the world. Dear General, history only repeats itself. Oh, how sad, how awful even to think that Ashoka will be remembered as a killer. And ambition has led him to kill. (*Coming alone a few steps*) Who is there to show him a new light ? Who is there to lead him to a new path ? Is there no kindly light to lead him to the way of peace ? Is there no great sacrifice which can wash all the blood from the hands of the blood-thirsty Ashoka ? Is there no voice of love that can silence the cries of murdered millions ? Are there no words of peace that can make me forget these mad scenes of blind fighting ? Oh Lord, Oh Lord ! (*He kneels down with a sobbing face*) (*A soft sweet incantation in a single voice is heard in the background*)

*Buddham saraṇam gacchāmi*

*Sangham saraṇam gacchāmi*

*Dhammam saraṇam gacchāmi*

*Everyone listens spellbound. The music comes nearer. The light is dim.)*

Upagupta : (*from background*) Is there anyone dying from thirst here ? I have brought the sacred water of Lord Buddha for them. Is there anyone ? My dear brother, no fear from me to anyone that lives. I am the servant of Buddha. I have come to give you the drink of eternal life.

Ashoka : (*in soft voice*) Minister, whose is this wonderful voice ? Who is he that has come to give eternal life ?

(*Minister rushes outside to see the man and comes back promptly*)

Minister : He is a queer man with long yellow clothes, and a shaven head. Probably he is a monk. And he is fearless. In the midst of the ruins and dying soldiers he walks calmly and gives them drinking water.

(*Again the chanting is heard in the background*)

Ashoka : (*Rises up with an unknown hope*) How sweet is this voice of life in a desert of death. We have only taken the lives of millions for a fortnight and this voice has come to give them back eternal life. (*Turning to General*) Call the monk. (*Turning to the audience*) I wish to see how he gives life to the dead.

(*General rushes out with 1st soldier and 2nd soldier. A few moments later the monk enters, followed by the General and the soldiers*)

Ashoka : Who are you that dares to walk in this field of flaming fire ? The corpses are still burning.

Upagupta : I am Upagupta, a humble servant of Buddha. I bring showers of Lord's mercy whenever there is suffering in the world. The fire of desire can never be extinguished by more desire. They can only be calmed down by the cooling showers of peace and love.

Ashoka : Who has called you to come to the dying ?

Upagupta : Lord Buddha. Just as your ambition of conquest has brought you here

all the long way from Pataliputra to murder innocent millions, Lord Buddha, the all merciful, has sent me to bring showers of love and mercy to the unfortunate ones.

Ashoka : But Buddha died centuries ago. Did he not ?

Upagupta : Yes, but Buddha is not a body. He is a spirit of undying love and endless mercy. Therefore he lives in the minds of millions. He is immortal in love.

Ashoka : How do you bring eternal life to the dying ?

Upagupta : To those who die from thirst I give drinking water from my water vessel. To those who live in body but suffer in spirit from the thousand sorrows of life, to those more wretched ones I bring the shower of Nirvana.

Ashoka : What is Nirvana ?

Upagupta : Nirvana is the end of all desire. Dear Emperor, your desire has given you the bloody conquest. And the great conquest brought death to millions. Do you think this conquest will bring you peace ? I see you are already sick with desire. I see your General, and the soldiers are sick with desire and war and bloody battle.

Ashoka : Tell me, Sir, what is the way of peace.

*(The General and the soldiers stand in respectful gesture behind the king)*

Upagupta : The way of peace is to give up selfish ambitions. The way of peace is

the way of love and not of destruction. The way to conquest is not through war, but through Dharma, the way of righteous living. The way of victory is not through murder but through mercy, love and sacrifice. Tell your general, your minister, your soldiers to rush to the dying ones and love them even in their last dying moments. The right kind of action will lead them to peace.

Ashoka : *(To the General, Minister and soldiers)* Do you hear the words of peace ? Go now to the dying ones. *(They leave the stage)* Holy Sir, how can I repay the words of nectar that you have given me.

Upagupta : But dear Emperor, I came to give drinks to the dying ones.

Ashoka : It is not they who are dying but the mighty conqueror Ashoka who is dying of wounded conscience in the midst of victory...Teach me, the cursed victor, the new way of life. *(Kneels down)*

Upagupta : *(In a posture of blessing)* Take refuge at the holy feet of Lord Buddha. He, the Enlightened one will lead you through the way of peace. The victories of Dharma and peace will bring you, dear emperor, much brighter laurels than the victories of a murderous war. May you be reborn in the name of Lord Buddha!

*Buddham śaranam gacchāmi  
Sangham śaranam gacchāmi  
Dhammam śaranam gacchāmi*

*The curtain falls*

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

### *The Chernobyl Episode*

The improbable finally happened leaving behind an unexpected spectre of death and disease on a continental scale. In last May, when the nuclear accident occurred at Chernobyl, European countries like France, Germany, Poland, Italy and Britain, besides Russia, were

suddenly awakened to a hitherto unexperienced fear of nuclear radiation. Dr. Manfred Popp, West German Government's director of nuclear energy research, said, 'It is something we had really feared—an accident of these dimensions, a full or partial meltdown of a reactor.' French



Government admitted, though late, that radioactive cloud from Russia had indeed raised the radiation levels of French soil. Spinach from the French border region of Alsace was found to contain 2,400 to 2,600 becquerel per kg. of radiation whereas the maximum permissible amount safe for health is 2,000 becquerels per kg. Instantly the prices of vegetables marked a sharp fall by 75%. In Netherlands people voted to power those candidates who assured delay in the construction of nuclear power plants. In Italy children under ten years and pregnant mothers were asked not to drink fresh milk even 4 weeks after the Chernobyl accident. In Scotland there was a dramatic decline in milk consumption. In West Germany shop-keepers had to assure their customers that vegetables and fruits had arrived from Spain where there was no radiation. Some political parties demanded a ban on all nuclear power plants in West Germany, which provide 36% of the Federal Republic's electricity. Ten thousand anti-nuclear protestors battled with police against the installation of new nuclear machines in Wackersdorf. The country, according to Chancellor Helmut Kohl, had gone 'crazy' in an anti-nuclear hysteria. Poland arranged to administer potassium iodide to children around the country as a possible antidote to the radiation hazard. Poles even uttered bitter jokes like, 'Be radiant'. In Italy, some political parties and pro-environmentalists launched a signature campaign of 500,000 citizens for a total ban on nuclear power plants.

In Russia, where the accident really happened, the picture is grim. According to international experts 100,000 Soviet citizens have received potentially harmful doses of radiation. 92,000 people have already been evacuated from the area. 15 persons died and 20, according to government statistics, were in critical condition.

It was Sweden which first publicized the accident. Later, Moscow admitted that the explosion had occurred when scientists were conducting experiments in Chernobyl reactor no. 4. Moscow even admitted, 'The accident took place as a result of a whole series of gross violations

of operating regulations by workers.' Chernobyl, like the atomic explosion on Hiroshima, is again a man-made disaster. History has repeated itself. This time the catastrophe has come not through aggression, but through unpardonable negligence on the part of working scientists.

Can we do without the nuclear power today? Most of the advanced countries are depending heavily on nuclear power. In Japan the Ikata plant near Hiroshima provides 26% of the nation's electricity. The Soviet Union's 41 nuclear plants provide 11% of the country's energy. In Britain nuclear power plants provide 18% to 20% of the energy of the nation. But new trends in thinking are surfacing. Sweden has affirmed its commitment to close down all nuclear power plants by 2010. India has already gained sufficient independence regarding the installation of nuclear power plants. Very recently India refused the Soviet offer of two new plants in India, as the government wants to avoid any dependency on foreign support. And rethinking about nuclear power plants had already started when Dhruva research reactor was shut down. The department of environment reportedly refused to clear the proposed nuclear power plant at Kaiga in Karnataka.

Schumacher's idea of smaller energy resources may be a viable idea for a world frightened by these nuclear giants, which sometimes revolt against total human control, thereby precipitating a global disaster. Two ways remain open to us: we close down all nuclear plants in the days to come and discover safer energy sources from nature, or we discover safer methods for the operation of nuclear power plants and take lessons from the Chernobyl episode. For the first one, we need a total repatterning of our existing super-industrial culture. May be, like Thoreau we too will have to go to a quiet Walden, sow seeds and live in utter simplicity of life with a new compensation-profundity of spiritual living. Or we have to evolve more responsible scientists who will not spare themselves in order to save the entire mankind. Global responsibilities and irresponsible minds ill go together.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**TRANQUILITY AND INSIGHT** (*An Introduction to the Oldest Form of Buddhist Meditation*): By A. SOLE-LERIS. Published by Century-Hutchinson (Rider Division) Brookmount House, 62-65 Chandos Place, Covent Garden, London WC2N 4NW. 1986. Pp. 176. £ 6.95.

As its sub-title indicates, this book is an introduction to the oldest form of meditation practised by Gautama the Buddha and prescribed by him to his followers. The author has followed and often quoted from the Pali text *Visuddhi-magga* of Buddhaghosha, which is the oldest manual of Buddhist meditation.

Practice of meditation in various forms has been prescribed by almost all religious faiths, but in no other religion has it been given so much importance as in Buddhism. True, in India—the land which gave birth to Yoga and Buddhism itself—meditation has been practised right from Vedic times. But in Hinduism meditation coexists with and is supported by various other disciplines and rituals, whereas in Buddhism meditation is the chief and all-embracing spiritual technique. Buddhism gave a tremendous impetus to the development of the theory and practice of meditation in India.

As is well known, Buddhism is divided into two main sects: Theravada (or Hinayana) and Mahayana, of which the former is clearly the older one. As Mahayana spread in different lands such as Tibet, China and Japan, it mingled with the cultural traditions of those countries and these accretions have a direct bearing on the various Mahayana meditation techniques such as zen, which have become quite familiar in the West in modern times. Although Theravada also spread to countries outside India such as Ceylon, Burma and Thailand, it remained faithful to the three main Pali canonical scriptures called the Tripitakas and has thus succeeded in maintaining the purity of the original Buddhist meditation techniques. Therefore Sole-Leris, the author of the book under review, is justified in describing the Theravada meditation tradition as the 'oldest form of Buddhist meditation'. Various meditation techniques lying scattered in the Tripitakas were collected by Buddhaghosha in his monumental work *Visuddhi-magga*.

Though the Pali Canons have been the subject of extensive research and studies by orientalists for more than a century, interest in

the Theravada practice of meditation has been roused only during the last thirty years. The main reason for this is that in Theravada countries Buddhist monks had for several centuries emphasized mostly the study of scriptures and the observance of moral principles. The revival of interest in meditation techniques began at the turn of the present century when a Burmese monk by name U. Narada Mahathera rediscovered the immense possibilities inherent in the *Satipatthana Sutta* of the Tripitakas. It was his disciple Mahasi Sayadaw and a lay man by name U Ba Khim, who popularized the Vipassana meditation technique. Sole-Leris has given a comprehensive account of the schools of these two masters and their successors in the last chapter.

The present book supports the thesis that although *samadhi* (*samatha* in Pali) or Tranquility as a state of stillness of mind was experienced by Buddha (it had been known to many others before him), he was not satisfied with it. So he went further and discovered a new method of cultivating deeper awareness known as *vipashyana* (Vipassana in Pali) or Insight which led to full enlightenment. Accordingly, there are two meditation paths in Theravada tradition: Tranquility (*Samatha*) and Insight (*Vipassana*). Until recently, in Buddhist monasteries both the paths used to be taught, training in Tranquility being usually considered an indispensable adjunct to Insight. What Mahasi Sayadaw and U Ba Khim did was to develop Vipassana as an independent technique adapted to the conditions of modern times.

Several books on these two meditation pathways have come into existence in recent years. The most comprehensive and authoritative of these is Nyanaponika Thera's *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (also published by Rider). Sole-Leris's book is a simpler introductory volume lucidly discussing all the essential features of both the paths. His book is divided into nine chapters. After an introductory survey, he discusses the three levels of concentration (*parikamma samadhi*, *upacara samadhi* and *appana samadhi*) and the various concentration exercises which provide the basis for the practice of both Tranquility and Insight. Chapter 5 is devoted to a discussion on *Samatha* and the states of absorption (*jhana*) produced by it. Chapter 6 is devoted to a detailed discussion on

Vipassana including the four Foundations of Mindfulness and the stages of progress resulting from it.

Nowadays Vipassana is being practised by thousands of people in all walks of life—businessmen, government officials, doctors, engineers, scientists and teachers mainly for its worldly benefits such as relaxation of body and mind, alertness and increase of work efficiency, cure of psychosomatic disorders, etc. But its original and ultimate aim is the attainment of the highest form of liberation known as Nirvana (Nibbana, in Pali). The author has devoted one chapter to it.

Contrary to popular belief, the actual practice of Vipassana involves intensive preparatory and life-long dedication. For those who want to know about the theory and practice of Vipassana we recommend the book under review as the best introduction to the subject. It provides yet another support to Buddha's exhortation: 'Meditate, and do not be remiss, that you may not have cause to regret it later.'

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**MODERN PHYSICS AND VEDANTA:** By SWAMI JITATMANANDA. Published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kulapati K. M. Munshi Marg, Bombay 400 007. 1986. Pp 87. Rs. 30.

It is the free spirit of enquiry and the common fields of interest that link the ancient Rishis of India with the scientists of modern age. In some of the utterances of top physicists like Albert Einstein, Max Planck, Werner Heisenberg and others we hear the echoes of the words of the Upanishadic sages who lived thousands of years ago. Physicists are heading towards the knowledge of the final unity of the universe—a 'grand unification' of mind and matter, subject and object, observer and observation. Vedanta too affirms this unity; according to it the entire universe is one, interconnected and interpenetrated by the ultimate Reality, which is of the nature of Consciousness, as the very basis of all existence and the ultimate goal of all knowledge. The exposition of the common ground between western science and ancient Vedanta was one of the important contributions to the world thought made by Swami Vivekananda as a part of his attempt to interpret ancient truths in a way acceptable to modern people. It is this great

work of Swami Vivekananda that forms the central theme of Swami Jitatmananda's book *Modern Physics and Vedanta*. Around this core the author has organized seven magnificent chapters each bringing out one particular aspect of modern physics and its counterpart in Vedantic thought.

The first chapter entitled 'Whither Physics Today' is a brief overview of the major trends in modern physics. In the next chapter entitled 'Vivekananda interprets Vedanta to the West' the author discusses the intellectual climate that prevailed in America and Europe at the end of the last century, the impact Swami Vivekananda made on it, and the implications of that impact. In the third chapter 'The Quest for the Ultimate Building Block of the Universe', Swami Jitatmanandaji traces the development of physicists' understanding of the nature of the ultimate particles from the 'water-melon' model of J. J. Thomson to the latest speculations on 'quarks'. The next chapter 'The Uncertainty Principle and the Omnijjective Reality' is a very interesting narrative which deals with in a scholarly way the famous postulation of Heisenberg and Einstein's objections to it. The chapter entitled 'Relativity and Maya' begins with a lucid account of the basic concepts of Einstein and ends with a discussion on Maya. In the chapter 'Intuition—the Common Basis of Science and Vedanta' the author shows how positivist thought in the West has gradually come to accept the fundamental role played by intuition in the conceptualization process. The author skilfully uses this acceptance to establish the validity and contemporary relevance of spiritual intuition upon which the whole system of Vedanta rests. In the final chapter 'Vedic Cosmology and Modern Astrophysics' the author discusses the 'Big Bang' theory of the origin of the universe in a captivating manner and points out its striking similarity to the cosmology propounded by the ancient Samkhya and Vedanta philosophers.

The above account is only a bare outline of the basic plan of the book. Its distinguishing feature is the wealth of quotations, anecdotes and a formidable amount of information on various relevant topics that the author has massed together from some of the most recent and authoritative works. As Dr. Raja Ramanna remarks in his Foreword, this book cannot be treated as an introductory volume. It, however, serves admirably well as a source book for both

students and general readers. Scientists and scholars will find the book highly stimulating. An index would have enhanced the usefulness of the book.

Swami Jitatmanandaji brings out forcefully that man's future largely depends on the possibility of his becoming both truly scientific and spiritual, not theoretically but in practice. This harmony between ancient insights and modern discoveries is a subject which is now assuming international dimensions. A time has come when man must address himself to the conquest of both outer and inner nature, and the integration of scientific temper and religious quest.

The author deserves our congratulations for presenting a book of this kind on Vedanta and Science, a synthesis of which should form the basis of man's total education as envisaged by Swami Vivekananda.

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**DIVINITY HERE AND NOW:** By A.R. NATARAJAN. Published by Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, 40/41, 2nd Corss, Lower Palace Orchards, Bangalore 560 003. 1986. Price not mentioned.

Bureaucrats are seldom expected to be creative. But there are notable exceptions like the author of this book. A top-ranking civil service official, Sri A. R. Natarajan has been devoting his leisure hours to the pursuit of the spiritual ideal. Drawn to the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Ramana Maharshi from his early youth, he is the founder-director of a spiritual and cultural centre in Bangalore and is a versatile scholar. He was on the editorial board of the journal *Mountain Path* and the present book is a collection of some of the editorials he wrote in that journal from 1982 onwards.

The title indicates the central theme of all the essays: the constant, unbroken, immediate awareness of the Self in every-day life, and the means of attaining it. Sri Ramana Maharshi has shown that the simplest and most universally applicable method of realizing the transcendental Self is to trace the 'I' thought to its source. This can be practised by both seekers of Knowledge and seekers of Bhakti. According to Bhagawan Ramana, the maintenance of such an inward

enquiry, *atma-vichara*, at all times is the best form of *tapas*, austerity. Sri Natarajan's chief endeavour is to show that *atma vichara* does not stand in the way of performing the daily duties of life. He also stresses the need for great earnestness in this path of enquiry which he carefully distinguishes from meditation. With the help of quotations from the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi and anecdotes from his life, the author clarifies, in a refreshingly original way, several psychological and metaphysical principles involved in spiritual life. Spiritual aspirants, especially those who are familiar with Sri Ramana Maharshi's teachings, are sure to derive inspiration and practical benefit from this book.

K.P.V.

#### TAMIL-SANSKRIT-ENGLISH

**UPADESA UNDIYAR (OF BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA).** TRANSLATED FROM TAMIL INTO ENGLISH BY SADHU OM AND MICHAEL JAMES. Published by Sri Ramana Kshetra, Mounalayam, 14, Manakkula Vinayakar Street, Tiruvannamalai 606 603. Tamil Nadu. 1986 Pp 52. Rs. 6.

**UPADESA SARAM (OF BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI):** TRANSLATED FROM SANSKRIT INTO ENGLISH BY A. R. NATARAJAN. Published by Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, 40/41, 2nd Cross, Lower Palace Orchards, Bangalore 560 003. 1984. Pp. 63. Price not mentioned.

Here are two different editions of the same text containing the quintessence of the teachings of the great sage of Tiruvannamalai, Sri Ramana Maharshi. The original work in Tamil, consisting of 30 verses composed by Sri Ramana Maharshi himself, is actually a part of a much larger work by the Tamil poet-saint Muruganar entitled *Tiruvundiyar*, a hymn in praise of various gods, goddesses and Avatars. In one place in that hymn Lord Shiva is depicted as giving advice to some ascetics. Muruganar requested Sri Ramana Maharshi to compose some stanzas as Shiva's advice. Accordingly, the Maharshi composed thirty verses epitomizing the fundamental principles of Vedanta. These thirty verses came to be separately printed as *Upadesha Undiyar*. Sri Ramana Maharshi himself later on translated these stanzas into

Telugu, Malayalam and Sanskrit under the title *Upadesha Saram*.

The first book by Sadhu Om and Michael James is a word-to-word English rendering of the original Tamil verses (*Upadesha Undiyar*) with brief annotations, while the second book by A. R. Natarajan is a running translation of the Sanskrit verses (*Upadesha Saram*) with a commentary in English. It is clear Sri Ramana Maharshi's own Sanskrit rendering is not a literal translation of his original Tamil work. Apart from this fact, the two books differ from each other in several respects. Sadhu Om's notes are terse, accurate and illumine several metaphysical points in an authoritative and original way. Sri Natarajan's comments are more discursive and lucid and are documented by cross-references to other works of Ramana Maharshi.

The subject-matter of both the books is of course the same. It includes karma, divine grace, worship, meditation, breath control, control of mind, nature of mind, the merger of mind in the Self, the relationship between the soul and God, and similar topics. The most important and characteristic teaching of Sri Ramana Maharshi is given in three verses: 'Wherefrom this "I"-thought arises? If one enquires thus, it vanishes. This is self-enquiry.' (Verse 19). 'In the place where "I" (the mind or ego) merges, the one (existence-consciousness) appears spontaneously as "I", "I" (or "I am I"). That itself is the Whole (*purna*)'. (Verse 20). 'That ("I-I", the Whole) is always the import of the word "I", because we exist even in sleep, which is devoid of "I" (the thought "I", the mind)' (Verse 21). Both the books are a boon to sincere spiritual aspirants.

K.P.V

### SANSKRIT

**SADDARSHANAM** (*A Sanskrit translation of the original Tamil work of Sri Ramana Maharshi with a commentary in Sanskrit*): BY SRI VASISHTHA GANAPATI MUNI. COMMENTARY BY KAPALI SASTRI. Published by Shri T. N. Venkataraman, Sri Ramanashramam, P.O. Tiruvannamalai 606 603. 1986. Pp. 87. Rs. 12.

The philosophy of Sri Ramana Maharshi epitomized in his original Tamil work 'Forty Verses on Reality' has been lucidly expounded

in the present Sanskrit composition. The main work consists of 44 stanzas in *upajati* metre. These stanzas lead us deep into the thought of Sri Ramana Maharshi. The main theme here is that God who is omnipotent manifests Himself through all the sentient and non-sentient things. The ultimate Reality is of the nature of Absolute Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. One who sees God and the world, both with form and without form, is the one who has had the total vision. (Stanza 6). Without the five sheaths (*koshas*) enveloping the Self it would be impossible to experience the world. Without the gross body can any one have the experience of the outer world? (Stanza 7). The outer world itself, which is the creation of the Self enables us to grasp the attributes 'of seeing' and 'of being seen'. But there is a total identity between the seer and the seen. There is also a relation of identity between the subtle mind and its gross form—the world. If Devadatta's mind is lost, the world created by his mind is also lost. But this has no effect on the mind of Yajnadatta or of Ishwara emanated as the world. (Stanza 8). The ultimate Reality alone has no birth or death. (Stanza 9). The establishment of identity with this Reality may alone be called the vision of the Truth. (Stanza 10). Duality will vanish as soon as one realizes that the Self is the substratum of all knowledge and objects of knowledge. (Stanza 13). The ignorant and the wise both have their universes. The visual world is true for the ignorant, but the substratum of the visual world flashes as total Reality before the wise. (Stanza 20).

The ineffable Reality thus discussed is threadbare in the thirty-nine stanzas. At last it is said that a man is bound to suffer the fruits of his actions unless he cleanses his mind of the idea of his being the doer. When he does so, he reaches the state called Liberation or *mukti*.

The original stanzas in the Tamil book are a succinct exposition of the philosophy of life lived by Sri Ramana Maharshi. The Sanskrit rendering of the Tamil work is lucid and, if sung, will sound melodious. Shri Vasishta Ganapati Muni has rendered a great service to those who are interested in Maharshi's philosophy, but do not know Tamil. Kapali Bharadwaja, the great scholar and follower of Sri Aurobindo has provided an elegant, well-orchestrated commentary on the Sanskrit stanzas. This has gone a long way in enabling the aspirants to appreciate the truth of these great teachings.

Books of this kind which reinterpret ancient situations. insights play a vital role in the development of a correct attitude towards life in modern

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## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION STUDENTS' HOME, MYLAPORE, MADRAS

REPORT FOR 1985-86.

Started under the inspiration of Swami Ramakrishnananda in 1905 in a modest way with just 5 orphans, this institution has now grown into its present dimension with the capacity to provide free board to 358 students. The Home which follows the Gurukula system of education runs the following institutions.

*The Hostel at Mylapore:* accommodates a total number of 319 students belonging to following sections: Residential High School boys: 176; Residential Technical Institute boys: 120; boys studying in different institutions: 23. All the inmates of the Home are under the care of monastic wardens and lay wardmasters. Emphasis is laid on character formation through moral and religious instruction. Puja, prayer, observance of religious festivals are some of the activities of the hostel. All the domestic activities of the Home are carried out by the students themselves under the guidance of superiors.

*Residential High School:* (Standards VI to X). Out of a total number of 176 students, 100 belonged to backward communities and 16 belonged to S.C. and S.T. In the 1985 S.S.L.C. examination 38 students appeared and 36 passed. School education in the state being free, scholarship is offered to some students for the purchase of the text books and for the payment of examination fees.

*Residential Technical Institute:* offered a three-year diploma course in mechanical engineering with three electives: automobile technology, machinshop technology and agricultural farm equipment technology. There were 40 students in I year, 39 in II year and 41 in III year. In the final D.M.E. examination of May 1985, out of the 42 students who had

appeared, 39 students passed—all in first class. While scholarship was offered to all the students, 28 belonging to backward class enjoyed a further benefit of 50 per cent concession in fees and 8 others full freeship. Inplant training for the final year mechanical engineering students was arranged in a number of well-known firms in the city. There were 4,853 books in the institute library and 1418 books in its Bookbank. In the part-time evening post-diploma course (of 1½ years) in automobile engineering 12 students appeared for the final examination in April 1985 and all of them passed in first class. 18 candidates were admitted in September '85 in IV batch. Classes were conducted for the course of A.M.I.E Section A (Diploma stream) with 43 students.

*Ramakrishna Centenary Primary School:* completed 51 years of its service. The school is housed in a two storeyed pucca building. It has standards I to V, with a strength of 354 children, of which 195 are boys and 159 are girls.

*Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Mallankaranai:* The Home runs a middle school from standard I to VIII with a strength of 236 boys and 98 girls, and a hostel for 39 boarders from backward communities, as a part of the village development program in Mallankaranai, Dist. Chengleput, where it owns an estate. Agriculture is taught as a prevocation subject in the school. Under the village development program, the Mission has taken many initiatives such as reclamation of saline soil, cultivation of fruit trees, maintenance of a primary health centre in its premises for the benefit of the villagers and organizing cultural activities for the youth. For these various projects undertaken by the Home, its secretary solicits donation in cash or kind from the public. All donations, exempt from income tax, may be forwarded to the Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, 92, Sri P. S. Sivaswamy Road, Mylapore, Madras 600 004.



## **Ramakrishna Math, Pune**

### **Appeal for Construction of Monastery Building**

Ramakrishna Math, Pune, the branch centre of the world known Ramakrishna Order, has been functioning as a recognized branch since last two years and a half with various religious, educational and philanthropic activities, such as Charitable Homoeopathic Dispensary, Free Reading Room, Puja, Arati etc. Birthday celebrations of saints and incarnations, religious discourses, lecture series on various cultural and philosophical topics etc. we also arranged on various occasions throughout the year.

We have been feeling the pressing need of adequate buildings for conducting all these activities and on priority basis, we intend to take up the work of constructing the monastery building immediately. The estimated cost of this building is about Rs. 10 lakh (Rupees ten lakh) only.

We very earnestly request you to kindly send your generous contributions towards this work and thus help the pious cause which our institution is trying to serve.

Pune  
23rd December, 1986

SWAMI BHAUMANANDA  
President

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All contributions for this purpose may kindly be addressed to :

**Ramakrishna Math, 131/1-A, Parvati, Pune 411 030**

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## শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণের আবির্ভাবের দ্বাদশশতবার্ষিকী উপলক্ষে

রামকৃষ্ণ মঠ ও রামকৃষ্ণ মিশনের অধ্যক্ষ

শ্রীমৎ স্বামী গম্ভীরানন্দজী মহারাজের ভূমিকা সম্বলিত

## বিশ্বচেতনায় শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ

নানা দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণের দিবা জীবন ও বাণীর পর্যালোচনা। বিশিষ্ট সন্ন্যাসী, সাহিত্যিক ও দেশ-বিদেশের গবেষকবৃন্দের মননশীল রচনাসমৃদ্ধ অনবদ্য গ্রন্থ। শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ সম্পর্কে এ-জাতীয় গ্রন্থ ইতিপূর্বে প্রকাশিত হয়নি।

যাঁদের লেখায় গ্রন্থখানি সমৃদ্ধ হচ্ছে :

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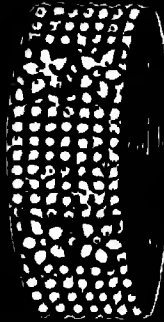
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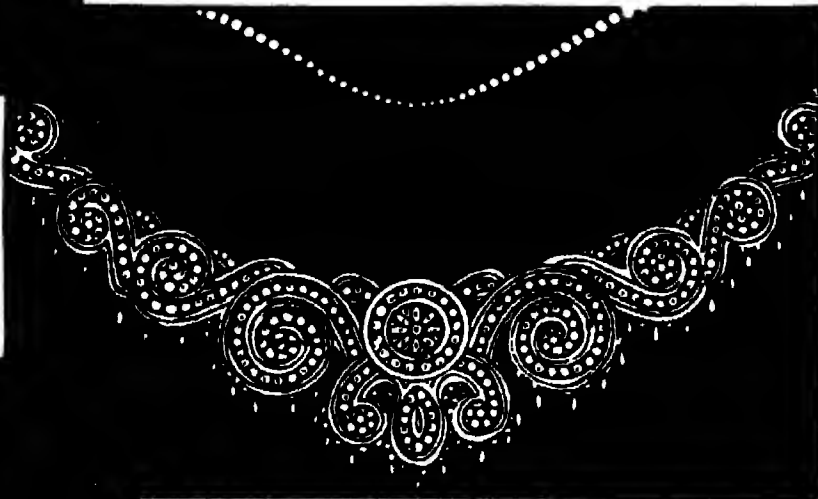
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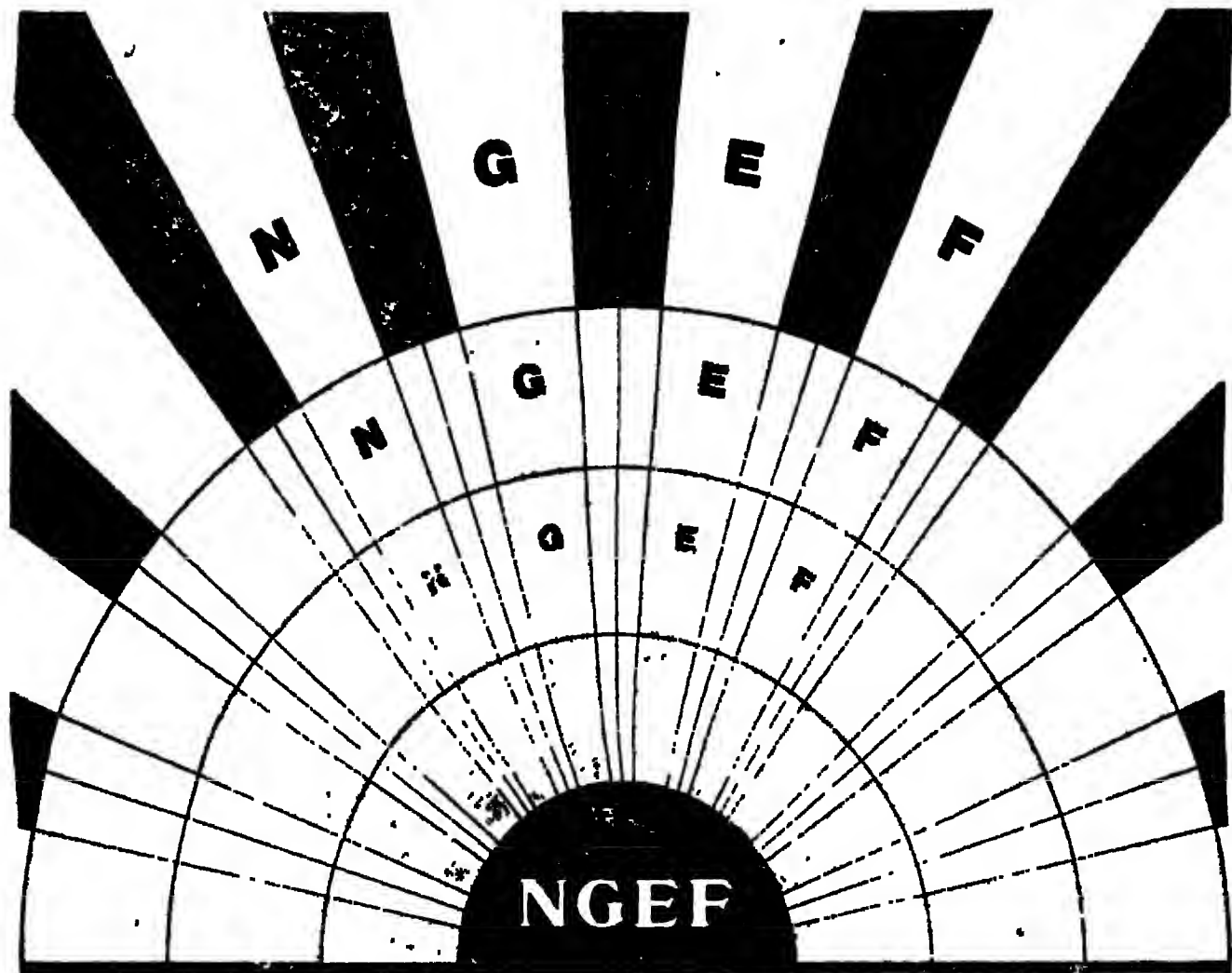
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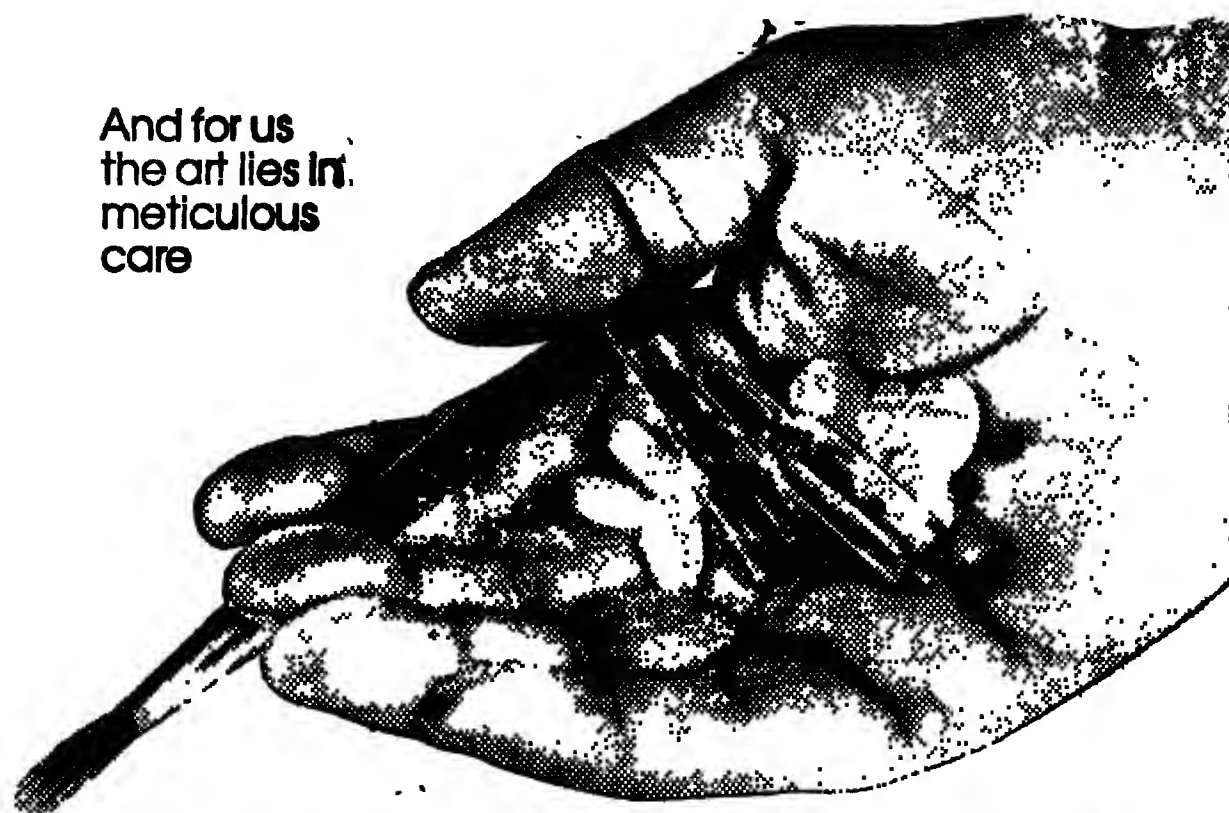
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No. 3

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'Immortality is attained through Self-knowledge'

Since He is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, the Speech of speech, the Life of life, and the Eye of the eye, therefore the intelligent men, after giving up (self-identification with the senses) and renouncing this world, become immortal.

That which is not uttered by speech, that by which speech is revealed, know that alone to be Brahman, and not what people worship as an object.

It is known to him to whom It is unknown ; he does not know It, to whom It is known. It is unknown to those who know well ; and known to those who do not know.

The Self is really known when It is known with each state of consciousness, because thereby one gets immortality. Strength is acquired because of the presence of the Self within. Immortality is attained through the knowledge of this Self.

If one has realized the Truth here, then there is Truth [or value in his life] : if he has not realized here, then there is great destruction. The wise ones, having realized the Self in all beings, and having turned away from this world, become immortal.

*Kena Upaniṣad*  
(1.2, 1.5, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5)

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is an attempt to describe how Sri Ramakrishna is being increasingly accepted, both in the East and in the West, as an incarnation of God.

In RELEVANCE OF YOGA IN TODAY'S LIFE Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission explains lucidly how yoga is essentially different from miracle-mongering and how it can help us gain our mental peace and attain to our inherent divinity.

In SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: MISSIONARY, SAINT OR PROPHET? Dr. Satish K. Kapoor, M.A. (London) Ph. D, explains the three terms, missionary, saint, and prophet and concludes that Swami Vivekananda was primarily a prophet. The author is a Reader, Postgraduate Department of

History, Lyallpur Khalsa College in Jalandhar city.

William of Saint Thierry (1085-1148 A.D.), the most influential mystic and theologian of the Benedictine Order after St. Bernard of Clairvaux is famous for his treatises in which he tries to synthesize the theology and mysticism of Western and Eastern Christianity. The article ABBOT WILLIAM OF SAINT THIERRY by Fr. M. Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O, of St. Joseph's Abbey, Spencer, Massachusetts, U.S.A., is a careful study of the spiritual teachings of the great saint.

Swami Chetanananda, head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, U.S.A., depicts the life of MANINDRA KRISHNA GUPTA a house holder devotee of Sri Ramakrishna.

## RAMAKRISHNA : GOD'S RETURN TO MAN

### (EDITORIAL)

One of our swamis who had recently visited Russia had a new experience. As he was listening to musicians in an international music festival held in Moscow, an old Russian lady came forward and asked him, 'Are you a swami from India?' When the swami nodded his assent, the lady asked again, 'Are you a swami of Ramakrishna?' With the second assent, her face now glowed with a smile. 'I, too, am a devotee of Ramakrishna. We are one hundred such in our group. We knew him through Romain Rolland's book. We meditate on him. Swami, you are indeed a very holy person, as you belong to Ramakrishna. I am not fit to sit in the same row along with you', she said. Despite all

the persuasions of the swami, the old lady took her seat in a back row. When the festival was over, she again approached the swami in utter reverence, with the words, 'Swami kindly give me through your holy self, the blessings of Ramakrishna.' Deeply moved, the swami remembered his master and raised his hands in benediction. For some moments, she got buried in the living presence of the God of this age.

Like this Russian lady millions in the West came to know of Ramakrishna when his first biography by Max Muller appeared within ten years of Ramakrishna's passing away. With the publication of the second biography of Ramakrishna by the French savant Romain Rolland, Europe first came

to know that another Christ-like personality had indeed appeared in recent times in India. The first world war was just over. Freed from prison where he was confined as an anti-war pacifist, Romain Rolland found a vast mass of ruins, 'a fever-stricken Europe, which has murdered sleep'. The devastating war had shattered man's faith in a providential God. Bernard Shaw said that British people thought of God a British general. Religion lost its hold. Man had lost his grip on the God within. Like many in the West, Rolland was also aware of the infinity of Godhead within. 'But, I had no key', he wrote, 'Neither Shakespeare, nor Beethoven nor Tolstoy, nor Rome' could offer him this key to the lost staircase of the inner kingdom. Finally in Ramakrishna, he found the man who 'more fully than any other men not only conceived, but realized in himself the total Unity of this river of God, open to all rivers and all streams'. Ramakrishna held out to him 'the book of life', 'with every word clear and complete.' Here was the 'blood of immortality', the perennial stream of divinity. 'I have drawn a little of his sacred water to slake the great thirst of the world', he declared. Before a second world war could break out, Rolland hastened to broadcast the message of the new messiah. The *Asia* magazine which first serialized this life in 1929, congratulated 'the distinguished Frenchman of letters' for his biography of Ramakrishna which 'offers a message to the people of the West', a message 'so clear and full in this Hindu saint that it can be passed on for the universal enrichment of man's spirit'.<sup>1</sup> Rolland had finally found 'the fruit of a new autumn, a new message of soul, the symphony of India, which is called Ramakrishna'. 'This

life is', he said, 'a consummation of two thousand years of spiritual life of three hundred million people'. Ramakrishna is 'a splendid symphony of the universal soul'. And like Beethoven's, this new symphony 'is fashioned from a hundred musical elements of past'.<sup>2</sup> In Ramakrishna, Rolland discovered 'the younger brother of Christ'. But this time it was an 'enriched' version. 'With each return he reveals himself a little more fully, and more enriched by the universe', said Rolland. Ramakrishna offered to the entire world, especially to the West, 'the key to a lost staircase', the staircase that led to the recapturing of the essential divinity which man had lost with his surrender to arms in the first global war. The 'law of spiritual inversion' tells us that God descends on earth so that man may ascend to God. Ramakrishna, like Christ, and Kṛṣṇa came to man so that man could evolve into God. Ramakrishna is, as Rolland discovered, 'our Son, our God reborn'.<sup>3</sup> It is God's new return to man.

Despite all the abundance of sensate pleasures, modern life turned into a 'big wastage', a saga of existential suffering, a frantic steeple-chase towards nothing. After Darwin, Marx and Schopenhauer, God was thought to be dead, and religion dying. Ramakrishna suddenly made God real, living! He made religion a power, a dynamo for the psychosocial evolution of man. With him the effulgent light of God entered into the sunless and dark life where man had 'murdered God', and forgotten the divinity of life. Like the boy Kṛṣṇa, he danced with the bliss and power of God on the head of Kālīya, dwarfing the arrogance of the serpent of a sensate

1. Romain Rolland 'Ramakrishna—A Modern Avatar', *Asia* (New York: Asia Publication Inc.) Vol. XXIX, October, 1929, pp. 761-63.

2. Ibid. p. 833.

3. Romain Rolland, *The Life of 'Ramakrishna'* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970) pp. 11-13.

culture born of rank materialism. 'What kind of an incarnation of God is Ramakrishna?', asks a Hindu, 'How many Rāvaṇas and Kāṁsas did he kill?' He killed no demons, but disproved and destroyed the unquestionable supremacy of materialism which gives birth to godless beings. His gospel removed from the modern mind all doubts and despairs about God and religion. His life showed the utter hollowness of gold and lust which are the two goals of a sensate culture.

Like Christ and Kṛṣṇa, Ramakrishna, too, came in simple guise. At first people could not recognize this unknown minstrel. But when he opened the floodgate of the knowledge and bliss of God, people wondered who this man was. Despite the fulness of knowledge, like a child, Ramakrishna would entreat with tears his Divine Mother not to merge him in the Ultimate Reality, but to make him revel in the bliss of God. In a mystic vision he once saw himself standing alone in a vast field stretching up to horizon, where 'on all sides there was a mist of bliss'. From this bliss emerged another boy, a Paramahansa, and both of them began to play and run in this all-engulfing bliss.<sup>4</sup> This cosmic bliss flowed spontaneously from his holy life. It scattered like unseen fragrance everywhere.

A widow mother who lost her only princess-like daughter, was condemned to inconsolable grief. Life lost all charm for her. Then one day Ramakrishna entered her dark chamber of bereavement. At once it was lit with joy. The mother, mad with an overwhelming bliss, burst out in an ecstatic outpouring of a resurrected life. 'Ah! Do you not see, I will die, die of this unbearable flood of divine bliss.' Awed

with reverence, she finally fell at his feet who contained all the bliss of life. And hundreds received this bliss. None returned empty handed. The stage actress Vinodini who had lost herself early in life, the drunkard dramatist Girish who alternated between debauchery and devotion, the philosopher M. who was on the verge of putting an end to his life, the intellectual-atheist Narendra who was frantically seeking God, the shepherd boy Rakhturam who used to cry for God, the miracle-monger Giriya and Chandra, the orator-leader Keshab, the thoroughly worldly landlord Mathur, the untouchable sweeper Rasik, the ascetic Kṛṣṇa-worshipper Gopala's mother, and hundreds of seekers who came to him, were blessed with this bliss of God. And once they came to Ramakrishna, the centre of life was shifted forever to God.

At the moments of divine ecstasy Ramakrishna's face radiated this unspeakable, divine bliss. One who saw him at these blessed moments wrote: 'No photograph taken of the Paramahansa in samādhi ever succeeded in reproducing the inward glow, the expression of divine ecstasy, Brahmānanda, stamped on the countenance.'<sup>5</sup> This bliss he radiated everywhere, in houses, temples, congregations, and every street of the great metropolis of Calcutta, wherever he moved. He came to show that without God life is perpetual pain and poverty of the soul. With him it is a perpetual festivity of bliss. Even during his last days when Ramakrishna suffered unbearable physical pain of cancer, this 'inner bliss' flowed like a subterranean current. And he would transmit this bliss to others just by a touch or a word or even a look. His constant refrain was, 'The goal is to love

4. *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmrta* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Sri Ma's Thakur Bari, 13/2, Guruprasad Chowdhury Lane, B.S. 1388) vol. 4, p. 259.

5. Nagendra Nath Gupta, *Ramakrishna-Vivekananda* (Bombay: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1931) p. 61.

God and taste the Divine Bliss'.<sup>6</sup> He came to manifest what the ancients had realized long before: 'From bliss, verily, all the beings have sprung. By the same bliss, they live. And in the same bliss they merge at the end.'<sup>7</sup> Ramakrishna and divine bliss are synonymous. The music of *sehnai* in the Dakshineswar Kali temple, and the song of the boatmen on the Ganga, used to bring to him the bliss of Brahman. The sight of the lion in the Zoo reminded him of Divine Mother Jagaddhātṛī riding on lion. The sight of the fallen girl in blue sari in the solitary garden of Dakshineswar, reminded him of mother Sītā sitting alone in Rāvaṇa's garden. The sight of a cross-legged European boy in Calcutta fields reminded him of the cross-legged Kṛṣṇa of Vrindaban. During all these moments Ramakrishna would lose himself in *samādhi*. 'When the body consciousness is gone, when God's presence is felt everywhere, whatever the seer sees, at once elevates him to the bliss of Samadhi', says our scriptures.<sup>8</sup> Ramakrishna lived this truth every hour in his life.

There was no dearth of eminent scholars in western philosophy, prominent pundits in Indian scriptures, and even leaders of new religious movements in those days. Calcutta, the great metropolis of the British empire in the East, was the favourite hunting ground of all these speakers, orators and religious luminaries. And yet all came to listen to Ramakrishna. Why did they throng to this uneducated Kālī-worshipper of Dakshineswar temple? He gave them what others could not. He spoke with authority. The village brahmin's words sounded like words of God, the gospel. His words flowed unhindered like revelations. Simple parables and rustic

similies flickered out like tongues of fire bringing at once clarity and depth in so-called abstruse philosophical questions. And this knowledge was never exhausted as he was never disconnected from the source of all knowledge, his Divine Mother.

By unprecedented renunciation, austerities, and years of life-denying disciplines and spiritual struggles, he obtained the vision of the Divine Mother Kālī. People used to wonder and gather round him when the young priest used to weep disconsolately for the vision of the Divine Mother. The early death of his father and his family poverty had turned him forever from the mutability of life to God. The traditional Hindu faith that gods and goddesses are real, had trickled into the veins of this village boy. Now he was determined to know for himself if God was real. His prayers were not piety, but passionate cries. Finally he decided to kill himself, when all prayers failed. Then one day at the steps of death, Divine Mother revealed Herself to the child. Henceforward She became more real to him than anything else. He talked to Her. He lived with Her. He moved and had his being entirely at Her dictates.

Yet this was not the end, but only the beginning. Mother now inspired her child to walk through all the avenues of worships and religions. The intrepid spiritual athlete now had a successful training in Tantra under an outstanding spiritual woman, in which he was permanently established in the motherhood of God. One after another, he had direct visions of Rāma, Sītā, Hanumān, Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā and the child-Rāma known as Rāmlālā. He had even other mystic visions of Maya, Brahman, the world and the various other aspects of the Hindu religion. All these over, Ramakrishna eagerly listened to the Bible for some days. In that Christ-mood he had the vision of Christ. He also practised

6. *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta*, op. cit. vol. 5, p. 83.

7. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 3.6.

8. *Dṛg Dṛśya Viveka*, 14:

Islam in the sufi style, calling the name of Allah, and realized the truth of sufi Islamic sadhana.

But the hound of heaven did not leave the seeker halfway. The tigress of this phenomenal existence, the Divine Mother, led Her child to where both the Mother and son are merged into one. Ramakrishna was heading to the realm of non-dualism. After having visions of gods and goddesses, he was finally tempted to cross the domain of God with form, and enter the world of One Reality of which the gods and goddesses are only different facets. An ascetic called Totapuri led him in this difficult journey. Ramakrishna's constant love to Divine Mother was now the greatest obstacle. The child trembled to leave his Mother behind. But finally he succeeded. The desperate athlete of God finally made it. With the sword of knowledge he cut asunder the veil of Mother by which the Ultimate Reality was obstructed before his final monistic vision. Ramakrishna entered the realm of final transcendence beyond space, time and causation. The salt doll got merged into the sea. The dualism between Mother and son was now gone forever. Brahman and Śakti became one. The transcendent and the immanent became one.

Had Ramakrishna been an ordinary mortal that would be the end. Men who went to enjoy the merriment on the other side of the wall, as Ramakrishna later spoke in his parables, jumped into the fray and failed to return. They could not tell others what joy it was to be there. It was the God in Ramakrishna who returned to tell others what transcendent joy it was on the other side of the relative existence. And this journey from the relative to the Absolute, and again back to the relative, became the natural and daily sport of Ramakrishna. The Divine Mother asked her son to stay on the 'threshold of relative

existence'. Like a mad man he continually went down to the ocean of immortality and brought its sacred water to those who were thirsting for God. That became his vocation. Days and nights, months and years, Ramakrishna did this with a divine passion for suffering humanity, irrespective of caste, creed, and religion. 'He verily becomes the emperor of all', says the Upaniṣad, 'in all the worlds he moves freely with the boundless bliss of God.'<sup>9</sup> Ramakrishna, the emperor in the realm of spirituality, made a bridge between the world of men (*jīvaloka*), and the world of God (*śivaloka*), his dear ones used to say.

Religions had become circumscribed by rituals, blind obedience to holy texts, and exclusivistic claims. In Bengal the Śakti-worshippers would not touch the *tulsi* leaves meant for the worship of Viṣṇu. The Vaiṣṇavites could not even stand the name of Kālī. In South India the fight between the *tengalais* and *vaḍagalais* regarding the Vaiṣṇavite markings on the forehead of the ceremonial elephant, reached privy council in London. Followers of Semitic religions were and still are killing millions in the name of their own god. Religions separated man from man, and thus man from God. Casteism, untouchability and fundamentalism brought untold atrocities in the name of religions. 'Religions of the world have become life-less mockeries', said Vivekananda. Ramakrishna breathed life into it. He united man with God, and thus united man with man, removing all distinctions of caste, creed and religion, in a tempestuous tide of divine love to one and all.

Books were dry pages with the theories printed on them. Ramakrishna's life brought credibility to books. He brought the shower of divine bliss in the arid desert of lectures, and sectarianism. Here was a

9. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 7.25.2.



man who showed what character is, what renunciation is, what purity is, what catholicity is. While some religious leaders were trying to make a comfortable union of worldliness and renunciation, Ramakrishna's renunciation was complete. Worldliness to him was enjoyment of woman and gold. Ramakrishna rejected both to an incredible extent, beyond ordinary human thinking.

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When the flower blossoms bees come of themselves. Now people began to throng round him, and sometimes in multitude. Here was a strange man whose vast spiritual experiences in all their depths and expansiveness stunned even the most advanced spiritual souls in those days. Before his direct realization of countless gods and goddesses of Hinduism, the Christ and Mother Mary of Christians, the Allah of sufi Islam, the formless One of the Upaniṣads, the Immanent One of the Vedas, even scriptures paled into insignificance. The blinding radiance of his life virtually awed and overpowered the pundits, scholars, and intellectuals. Keshab Chandra Sen, the eminent Brahmo leader, openly declared that in the Samādhi-face of Ramakrishna, he had seen the transcendence of Christ and Caitanya. Padmolochan, the renowned Hindu theologian and the court pundit of Burdwan, was overwhelmed when he first met Ramakrishna, and said, 'The holy dust of your feet can turn score of fools into pundits like me. The concept of incarnation is a trifling one. You are the One who creates incarnations of God. Well, if anyone challenges my statement I am prepared to defend it on the strength of holy texts. Your experiences have gone far beyond those recorded in the Vedas and Purāṇas.'<sup>10</sup> Vivekananda, the most

brilliant and rational among his dearest disciples, turned to scriptures in order to understand his master's life 'whose brightness would without them have dazzled him', wrote Nivedita, 'and left him incapable of analysing it.'<sup>11</sup> Vivekananda wrote: 'His life alone made me understand what the Sastras really meant, and the whole plan and scope of the old Sastras.' Eminent pundits of Bengal in fact, had already met in Dakshineswar in an open meeting and had concluded from the authority of the scriptures that it was the Incarnation-Power of God that was working through the simple human body of Ramakrishna. Yet with Ramakrishna, the eternal child, the ego had been totally obliterated. 'He was not humble, but he seemed to have forgotten that Ramakrishna had ever been.'<sup>12</sup> 'I' and 'mine' were unknown to Ramakrishna. 'Whatever exists is the Divine Mother', he used to say. 'He was contented to live the great life', wrote Vivekananda, 'and to leave it to others to explain'.<sup>13</sup>

A brimming river cannot contain itself. Nearly twelve years ago Ramakrishna had left the metropolis of Calcutta, totally rejecting its values, and had withdrawn himself into the secluded forest-garden of Dakshineswar temple, in order to realize God. Today he made a triumphant return with God, in the fullness of love. The spiritual radiance of Amitabha Buddha now combined with an all-embracing compassion of Avalokiteśvara Buddha, who turns every movement in hundred directions, in order to respond to the least cry of human suffering. Ramakrishna returned not to preach, but to love those

Sri Ramakrishna', *Prabuddha Bharata* (Calcutta: 1980) vol. 85, p. 338.

<sup>11</sup>. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1972) p. 159.

<sup>12</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 490.

<sup>13</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>10</sup>. Swami Prabhananda 'First Meetings with

whom, like Jonathan Seagull, he had once left behind. He returned not merely to scholars or temples or holy men, but more to the masses, to common men and women who were crying for God's grace.

Vivekananda found in his Master 'a new God' and 'a new religion'. With a prophetic vision he asked modern man to turn from the worship of the 'dead past' to that of Ramakrishna, the 'living present'. 'He is', Vivekananda understood 'the reformed and remodelled manifestation of all the past great epoch-makers in religion'.<sup>14</sup>

Western religions of Judeo-Christian origin, as historian Toynbee pointed out, began on 'the west bank of the river Jordan'.<sup>15</sup> The Jewish God Yahweh, the Islamic God Allah, and the Ahura Mazda of the Zoroastrianism, or the Father in heaven in New Testament 'came to be thought of as being fatherly, loving, righteous, but he was still held to be omnipotent.' He punishes evil-doers. He is kind to his followers and sometimes promises heavens full of wine and sense-pleasures. But a question, says Toynbee, was never properly answered. If the Almighty father is all-compassionate, and omnipotent, how is it that He creates so much of evil and suffering?<sup>16</sup> India knew the answer ages before. And Ramakrishna gave the answer by his realization of God as Divine Mother. 'The Divine Mother has become everything'. She is in evil. She is in good. She is life. She is death. It is all her play. 'She is the gallows. She is the executioner. She is the victim', Ramakrishna used to say. Our

karma leads us to bliss or suffering. Mother can untie that knot of karma, if one turns to Mother. And even that turning to Mother depends on Her will. The way to receive Her grace is total surrender to the Divine will. Puruṣa is the pure consciousness. Prakṛti or Mother is the dynamic aspect of that Absolute consciousness, like the serpent and its undulating movement. Her will may mean both death and immortality. She is Kālī, the all-destroyer and all-preserver. One must face death in order to reach out to Her.

For the semitic religions there is no reincarnation. Death is the finalé of life. And doom's day is the ultimate destiny of humanity, after which the great judgement by the ruling Almighty, will award either a *paradiso* or an *inferno* to the believers. The philosophy of existentialism, more developed after the first world war, made death not only the finalé, but the only way of escape from 'suffering', which, in the sophoclean way, is embedded in the very existence of life. 'Today', says Toynbee 'westerners find the prospect of annihilation unbearable'.<sup>17</sup> 'The West', he believes, 'have been less clear-sighted and less-courageous-minded than the Hindus. It is better to face the truth about the universe'.<sup>18</sup>

Ramakrishna realized this whole truth of life in both its earthly sufferings and its divine bliss. Despite his constant absorption in God, Ramakrishna was intensely human, and more sensitive to human suffering than the most sensitive amongst us. When a boatman slapped his brother on a boat in Ganga, Ramakrishna, standing far away on the steps, cried out in agonizing pain. Those slappings were stamped on his back. When his beloved nephew Akshay died Ramakrishna writhed in an agony of inconsolable grief. The absence of his

14. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1978) vol. 6, p. 186.

15. Arnold Toynbee, 'What does the West have to Learn from the East?', *PHP* (Japan: PHP Institute International Inc.) August 1974, p. 4.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

beloved boy Narendra made him weep for days together. But the next moment, at an altered state of consciousness, he would realize that it is all due to the will of his Divine Mother. In Her curse there is the opening to a higher bliss. And both bliss and peace would soon return to Ramakrishna. The fullness of faith and completeness of spiritual vision realized in God as Mother, mark Ramakrishna as a path-finder for those who worship God only as a father, a ruler, a justice-giver, or only as a symbol of all good.

That all paths lead to one God is not a new concept to the Hindus, although it is unknown to semitic religions. Kṛṣṇa speaks of this idea in the Gita. But Ramakrishna demonstrated this by his life, stepping far beyond the boundaries of the Hindu faith. He had the vision of Christ as a child on the lap of Mother Mary, and this vision appealed more to Ramakrishna who himself was a child of Mother. Ramakrishna experienced and realized God in all its aspects, God as mother, as friend, as lover, as father, as child, and finally, again, as Mother. The Motherhood of God became his crowning achievement. Muhammad Daud Ruhbar wrote that Ramakrishna 'should be remembered as the Son of Woman' as Jesus 'is remembered as the Son of Man'.<sup>19</sup> Nivedita, the western disciple of Vivekananda, wrote, 'the soul that becomes a child finds God oftenest as Mother.'<sup>20</sup> Ramakrishna's life demonstrated religion as one of love for God, especially, God as Mother, who is nearer than the nearest to us. His was not a religion of submission to and fear of a ruling God, the Almighty, the punisher, or protector. His was not a religion meant

for proselytization or crusade. His was the religion of a total surrender to God and an universal love spanning continents and uniting religions.

Physicist Fritjof Capra has shown that civilization today has made a shift to a new paradigm, a new set of values and thinkings. The male principle of reason, domination and power symbolized by *yan* is giving way, both in science and society, to the female principle *yin* of mutual understanding, cooperation, harmony, complementarity of opposite thoughts and universal love to all, irrespective of caste and creed.<sup>21</sup> Ramakrishna, the greatest champion of the Motherhood of God, stands as the beginner and the epitome of this new paradigm. Did Ramakrishna's Mother-worship have any impact on the world? Probably it is too early to predict. But indications are clear. Thirty thousand Christian nuns and monks have appealed to Pope for a rewriting of the Bible. Who said God is father? Who can deny that God is Mother? Let there be 'our Mother and Father in heaven' where it was only 'our Father in heaven'. The pressure is mounting.<sup>22</sup>

Materialism taught us to respect 'gold' or economic prosperity as the end of life. Ramakrishna realized that religion is not possible for empty stomachs. But he also realized that bread is not the end, but the means to something higher in life—the divinity within. He renounced gold. And this renunciation was so complete that even an inadvertent touch of coin sent him to convulsions of pain. When somebody offered him money, he fainted. What more does a man need when he is perpetually protected by the Queen of the universe?

19. *World Thinkers on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1983) p. 13.

20. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit. vol. 1, p. 465.

21. *The Schumacher Lectures*, Ed. Satish Kumar, (London: Sphere Books Ltd. 1982) Abacus Edn., pp. 130-135.

22. *Time* (New York) 24, October 1983. p. 40.

Would it not be a betrayal to depend upon man?

The renunciation of Ramakrishna is not exhausted here. The vision of Divine Mother Ramakrishna had experienced in the temple of Kali. As time went on, Ramakrishna began to see the visible manifestation of the same Divine Mother in all women, even in the fallen ones. With Ramakrishna a dichotomy between thought and action was unknown. The intensity of this realization now drove him to practise it in his own personal life. Finally on an auspicious night he literally worshipped his own young wife Sarada Devi as Divine Mother. Christ did not marry. Buddha and Caitanya left their wives. Ramakrishna's absolute renunciation of sensate pleasures ended in deification of his own wife with whom he lived all through like a child, in unbroken purity. He demonstrated what the *Iśa Upaniṣad* taught us—the deification of life, by renunciation of lust and greed. Ramakrishna's renunciation is superhuman. His holiness is unparalleled. History has no such precedence. Vivekananda wrote, 'It took me six years to understand that he was not holy, because he had become holiness itself'.<sup>23</sup>

Ramakrishna's another disciple, Swami Saradananda, said that after his historic realization of Mother in all women, Ramakrishna was transformed into a child, and his body-consciousness was gone forever. And with the loss of body consciousness, Ramakrishna was permanently elevated to *Divya-bhāva*, a state of Divine consciousness.<sup>24</sup> He saw God everywhere. God as Mother led him to the highest monistic vision attainable to any human

being. He used to say that in this age one will attain to the divinity in life earlier by worshipping God as Mother. The name of Mother drives away at once Maya, the enchantress, the veiling and deluding power of ignorance.

We have seen how Ramakrishna in his Advaita sadhana had realized that the transcendent and the immanent are one. Thenceforward he rejected nothing as 'unreal', but accepted everything as manifestation of God. One must take the bel fruit, he used to say, in its wholeness with its kernel, its seeds, and even its outer shell. As this vision deepened, the distinction between work and worship, between the sacred and the secular, between the sentient and insentient fell off. Religions, today, are killing human beings like beasts of prey. Ramakrishna saw the living in the non-living. In the broken stone image of Kṛṣṇa in Dakshineswar temple, Ramakrishna saw the 'living God'. He refused to banish it and made it 'whole' by his life-giving touch. He used to speak, in his usual humour, of the three divine figures in Vaisnava scriptures—'Advaita, Caitanya, Nityānanda'.<sup>25</sup> When man sees one (Advaita) everywhere, his higher consciousness (Caitanya) is awakened. Life then becomes a place of perpetual bliss (Nityānanda). He vehemently chided the Vaisnava *bābājīs* when they spoke to him of 'compassion to living beings'. 'Compassion?' protested Ramakrishna. 'Who can show compassion to God in flesh and blood? Nay, not compassion, but worship of God in man.' His life itself stood out as demonstration of this living truth. He refused to reject the fallen actresses, the untouchable sweeper, and the drunkard despots. He gave them his blessings and spoke to them the kindest words, and

23. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit. vol. 1, p. 485.

24. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, translated into English by Swami Jagadananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1978) p. 233.

25. *Sri Sri Rāmākṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta*, op. cit., Vol. 5, p. 94.

cared for them even when he lay on death bed. Ramakrishna thus turned religion into service. The uplift of the common masses became a spiritual pursuit. Spiritual transcendence finally led to spiritual dynamism—the practical Vedanta, which is Ramakrishna's unique gift to humanity.

In a vision Ramakrishna once saw himself sitting alone on a mountain on skulls.<sup>26</sup> Did he see himself as the life-giver to the dead bones of our civilization, where 'hollow men' with their 'headpiece filled with straw' had embraced a death of the soul in lieu of a few fishes and loaves? Did he see himself as the saviour of a world where war-mongers were getting ready to leave behind only mountains of skulls? Today we stand with sufficient thermonuclear weapons by which we can bring the total devastations of 'World War Two *once a second* for the length of a lazy afternoon', as Carl Sagan put it.<sup>27</sup> We are ready for it. The craziest among us can trigger it any moment with the callous stupidity of Schopenhauer's 'blind will'. The superindustrial civilization today has brought machines and comforts. But peace has receded from modern men, and 'they are paying for this a higher price than ever in terms of psychological stress and strain'.<sup>28</sup> The need today is not more riches or the creation of another sectarian dogma. We have enough of lethal weapons along with mutually conflicting dogmas whose followers are busy in conducting colossal genocide in the name of religion. The

exigency of the hour is the restoration of 'normal human faculty of spiritual contemplation'. Ramakrishna's message puts an end to dogmatism, and brings us back to spiritual exploration for God within and without.

On that memorable day, 1 January 1886, when seekers of God approached him for grace, he only said, 'Let your higher consciousness be awakened.' The words fraught with a super human potency, made the blessed souls feel that their innate divinity had truly been awakened lifting them up forever from their biological levels to a divine life. Ramakrishna asked none to worship this god, follow that prophet, or respect that book. His message was to manifest the true manhood, the divinity in man, whatever be the path suited to the taste of the individual.

With infinite sacrifice he paved for us the way of survival and the way to perfection. Two sign posts signify this way: One is the unity of all creeds and religions, and the other is the essential divinity of life in a holistic universe. Toynbee, one of the international saints of this century, realized that Ramakrishna's way is the way of human survival today. Shall we listen to Ramakrishna, or surrender to our indifference to the God who returned to save us, and thus embrace total extinction? Only a 'higher sanity' can save us, and this is what is slowly emerging among the younger generation of the West, as Theodore Roszak discovers in his study of western man.

Nancy Louis Moore, a young and affluent girl, was burning herself in broad daylight right in front of a petrol pump in Los Angeles. As the flames of petrol began to envelop her, people saw with wonder that Nancy held out during these last moments a picture of Ramakrishna. She died quietly with her eyes fixed on the saviour. Probably Ramakrishna came too

<sup>26.</sup> *Śrī Śrī Rāmākṣṇa Kathāmṛta*, op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 56.

<sup>27.</sup> Quoted in Arthur C. Clarke, *Star Wars and Star Peace* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1986) p. 2.

<sup>28.</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, 'Paying the Price of an Industrial Revolution', *PHP*, op. cit., November 1974, p. 59.

late in her life, but Nancy's death-defying gaze proved she recognized the saviour.<sup>29</sup> This hunger for Ramakrishna is now increasing both in East and West.

Today Ramakrishna is slowly emerging as the symbol of all religions—*sarvadharmasvarūpa*. Hindus see in him the embodiment of all gods and goddesses—*sarvadevadevī-svarūpa*. Sufi mystics see in him a true mystic. Christians find in him the rebirth of a Christ. The world slowly sees in him, the 'God of All'.<sup>30</sup>

Vivekananda who understood him most, hardly preached him as an incarnation of God when he first began to preach Ramakrishna's message both in the East and the West. To this beloved disciple, Ramakrishna made his final self-revelation—'He who came as Rāma, He who came as Kṛṣṇa, has come this time as Ramakrishna.' Yet Vivekananda knew full well in the end of the nineteenth century, that time was not yet ripe for men to see God's return in Ramakrishna. To his erstwhile intellectual and atheist disciple, Vivekananda wrote: 'God, though everywhere, can be known to us in and through human character. No character was so perfect as Ramakrishna, and that should be the centre round which we ought to rally: at the same time allowing everybody to regard him in his own light, either as God, saviour, teacher, model, or a great man, just as he pleases.'<sup>31</sup> To Ramakrishna's own disciples, he wrote: 'spread only what he came to teach. Never mind his name—it will spread of itself'.<sup>32</sup>

That was during the last decade of the

19th century. Today Ramakrishna is a 'living presence'. His name inspires new life in dead souls. The 'spiritual impact' of his movement is emerging with a power to guide humanity, as Vivekananda saw it, 'for at least fifteen hundred years'. Like 'tidal waves' his ideas are rolling today both in the East and the West.

Recently in 120 Yoga Vedanta Centres in Basque and other places in Spain, more than seven thousand young men and women are literally worshipping the picture of Ramakrishna.<sup>33</sup> Buddha's and Christ's pictures are imaginary. Islam does not allow any picture of its Messiah. Ramakrishna's is the only historical photograph of a God-Man. A swami of the Order was invited to teach them the formal worship. Many more are waiting in vain for an evangel of Ramakrishna. A western swami of the Ramakrishna Order said recently, 'the increase in interest in Hinduism in Holland and Belgium is dramatic. In fact, we cannot hope to minister to such a huge flock.'<sup>34</sup> Western Vedantists, and even Russian intellectuals are eagerly waiting for the Ramakrishna Order to send swamis to their countries.

During his life-time Ramakrishna one day worshipped his own photograph and made the prophetic self-revelation, 'In times to come this photo will be worshipped in every household'. That time has come.

Today Ramakrishna is everywhere, in the grocer's shops as well as in the chambers of kings and philosophers. In the stark simplicity of his half-naked dress he seems to laugh at our affluence and amenities, our stock-piles of thermo-nuclear weapons. He smiles in the

29. Shankarī Prasad Basu, *Vivekānanda O Samakālīn Bhāratavarṣa* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Mandal Book House, B.S. 1383) vol. 2, p. 252.

30. Claude Allan Starke, *God of All* (Mass.: Claude Starke Inc., 1974).

31. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981) p. 68.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

33. 'Hindu Europe', *The Week* (Kottayam: A Malayalam Manorama Publication) January 1986, p. 21.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 22.



bliss of God. There is an unmistakable touch of Sītā's pathos in his radiant smile, a touch of Christ's and Buddha's compassion for the accumulated sufferings of men. With infinite love he seems to speak to us, 'He that followeth me shall not walketh in darkness, but shall have the light of life.... I am the truth, the way to the everlasting life.' Ramakrishna seems to remind us of God's new return to man.

## RELEVANCE OF YOGA IN TODAY'S LIFE

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

I feel great pleasure to be in your midst in this Ashrama. The subject for talk this evening is, relevance of yoga in today's life. By today's life I mean the modern way of living where we have made some advance so far as the acquisition of the various amenities of life is concerned. But then along with these amenities, there have also come various troubles with which we have been afflicted in our everyday life. It is not that we alone are facing these problems in India. The trouble is everywhere. In the affluent countries they have enough money, and sufficient amenities in life, but even then they are not happy. Most of us do not know how to get rid of this unhappiness born of affluence. Perhaps there is no possibility of having a society where there will be no difficulties, no conflicts, no troubles of any kind. Whether in the East or in the West, the condition of human life is more or less the same, though there may be different forms and different appearances of the joys and sufferings of life. One thing that is common everywhere, is that we are unhappy. This unhappiness is due mainly to our not being able to find a direction towards which we should make progress. We are talking of backward countries, advanced countries, rich countries, poor countries, but everywhere one common factor is always present. It is this all-pervading unhappiness, and if we go to the root of this unhappiness we will find that

our life is without a purpose. In the West people, particularly the younger generation, are extremely bewildered because they do not know what should be the purpose of life. In the absence of such a definite purpose, there are many in the West particularly the younger people, who are turning hippies. They are outcasts of the society. They cannot accommodate themselves in the society. Nor the society can find the means to make them integrated into it. They have become outcasts. They have gone out of the fold of society. They have refused to believe in the norms that are usually believed in. This is the unfortunate state of things both in the West and in the East.

In India many of us, we know, are below the poverty line, without having sufficient amenities of life. Many of us lack even the minimum requirements. We do not have enough to eat, we do not have enough to wear. We do not have enough accommodation in dwelling places. This is the primary need for everyone. Those who are comparatively affluent are found to be without any belief in ancient moral values and ancient philosophical roots in which their life can be stable and move firmly. Now that is the condition more or less everywhere in one form or other. We are suffering from the absence of a spiritual

\* Talk delivered at the Ramakrishna Mission, Raipur, M.P., on 1 December 1985.



direction in life. What should be the aim that we are striving to attain? What is our goal that we are to advance towards? When the goal is lost sight of, then turning backward or forward, being advanced or being backward, has no meaning. Advancement towards what? We do not know. Where are we going? What should be actual object that we want to attain in life? This is the unfortunate condition that we are passing through.

The subject that is to be the theme of today's talk is Yoga. Yoga is absolutely necessary for fixing our mind towards a goal. What is Yoga? We do not find any unanimity in its meaning. Very often we think by Yoga the tricks that are performed by jugglers. That is what we mean by Yoga nowadays. We hear, there is a great yogi who is going to remain buried under ground for one month. That is what is called Yoga. Similarly there are various other things which pass in the name of Yoga. There are tricksters who are considered to be yogis. Their performance is supposed to be yogic because of the supernatural powers they have gained by some means. This is no doubt a part of the Yoga, which says that by concentration of mind on various things and other kinds of disciplines such supernatural powers can, indeed, be attained. But acquiring supernatural power is not Yoga. Unfortunately, that is how the word Yoga has been very often misunderstood and misinterpreted. Anybody becomes a yogi if he can show something unusual which others cannot achieve. But the Yoga-sutra of Patañjali, or the Gita which are the sources of our yogic knowledge, never mention that sort of trickery as the goal of Yoga. The Yoga, in the true sense, means that sort of tranquillity of mind which will free us from the inner and outer tensions that we are suffering from constantly, everywhere. And this inner tension is increased all the more where

there is more of wealth. Yoga means to acquire for us a mind which will be balanced, which will be in equilibrium, which will not be disturbed by the passing phases of life or the changing environment around us. That is the state of mind which will be most suitable for the highest enlightenment in life. That is what is called Yoga. There are different kinds of Yoga, such as Bhakti Yoga, Jñāna Yoga and the Yoga of Patañjali which is considered to be the royal or Rāja Yoga. Also there is another phase of Yoga known as Karma Yoga. These Yogas are all meant for making a man draw out his inner essence of divinity. That is meant by the word Yoga. The means provided by Yoga is the systematic method of realizing our essential divinity which has been described by various sages, and in various scriptures. But the result will be one and the same—transcending our lower self and reaching the divinity within. We must have to raise ourselves above the animality, the state of animals. We have no control over our mind. We have no control over our passions. We have no control over the actions that we perform, and in this manner we are constantly dissipating our energy and perhaps we are just bringing us near to failures and frustrations. You know for certain that moral values have gone down very low. Even spiritual values, in general, are also at a low ebb. We all know it. But we do not understand or can not think precisely as to how we can get rid of this state and rise above this degrading condition so that we shall be in a better position to express the divinity that is within us. We are, in India, believers in the essential divinity of man. But that belief has become only a sort of dogma, only an article of faith. We never tried seriously to apply this ideal to life itself. Now, that is the reason why in spite of such high-sounding words that we utter, we are also at a great depth of degradation. Everywhere

this is the condition. Here, in our country, it is extremely painful to see that the land of the sages and saints has gone down to such an extent that our younger generation has almost lost faith in the heritage of our country. We feel that we are very much degraded because we cannot cope with the progress made by the western people technically, scientifically and economically. We think, our poverty is a sin. And that sort of self-degradation, that sort of a loss of esteem for our own heritage, is a ruinous factor for us. We are being ruined for this sort of self-condemnation. In this country particularly, poverty was never considered to be a crime. But today, because of the impact of western society and their way of life, we also have begun to feel in the same way. We also are thinking today that because we are scientifically backward, we are in a state of poverty. It is true that poverty should not be allowed to degrade our life. In our country the poorest section of the people are at the lowest rung of the ladder in society. But we have forgotten that poverty and irreligion or immorality do not go together. We are looking here and there only to improve our conditions economically by borrowing technology and other things from outside. Of course, whatever is necessary for raising the condition of the poor must be provided. But then, poverty itself should not be considered a crime. Even if we can transplant ourselves in the culture of the West and imbibe it, should we be happy? Is not unhappiness also rampant there?

So, we have to look back and find out what was considered by our *rishis* to be the safety of the entire humanity. And that safety is in maintaining a sort of equilibrium in our mental and spiritual horizon. This equilibrium we have lost today. But there are means for regaining the same. And these means are available in the teachings of the saints and sages, in our scriptures.

It is here that the word Yoga becomes relevant. Rāja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jñāna Yoga or Karma Yoga, any one or more of these various yogas can raise us from a state of internal and external sufferings to a better understanding of our future and better understanding of our goal. But we have not applied them to the daily life of our individuals. We speak of them, but it becomes simply a sort of hypocrisy, when we speak of things which we do not practise in our everyday life. This Yoga, therefore, has to be applied to the everyday life of our country, as also of the whole world. If this practice is continued seriously, the Yoga is bound to raise us, from where we are, to a higher state of existence, where there will not be so much strife, so much conflict, and so much miseries in various ways. That is what has to be understood.

The word Yoga, as we understand according to the sage Patañjali, the interpreter of Yoga, is what is called 'control of the mind'. It is the mind that makes us happy or unhappy because the mind is uncontrolled. Therefore, it leads to various kinds of miseries. Happiness, particularly abiding happiness, is possible only for a person who has controlled his mind so that the mind may not be scattered anywhere and everywhere. In the Upanisads it is said that the higher reason or intellect should be the restraining factor. Our human life is compared to a journey in a chariot. The higher reason in us is the charioteer who is seated in the chariot which is drawn by horses. The horses are compared to the sense organs. They are dragging this chariot of the body. These unbridled horses are to be controlled. Mind has been stated as the reins that hold the horses in the right direction, and the direction is given by *buddhi* or higher reason, the charioteer. It is the charioteer who gives a direction to the horses to pull the chariot in the right direction. If the horses are not controlled,

if the senses are not controlled by the discriminating factor *buddhi*, then naturally we shall be ruined. We do not know where the horses, the senses, will take us. It is only under the constraint of the mind which is directed by *buddhi*, that we can proceed towards the desired goal. That is clearly stated in our scriptures as the way to achieve success in life. Our success does not mean attaining a temporary objective. Because that temporary objective may not take us towards the ideal goal. Temporary objective may be anything. But the ultimate goal has to be kept in mind. Without our keeping constant watch as to whether we are losing sight of the ideal, the goal, we may be only distracted and led astray. That has to be clearly understood. And Yoga is an integral factor in directing our energy towards the final goal of realizing our divinity by gaining complete control over the senses. Yoga is the director to this final goal. It is here that Yoga has got relevance to our life, not only now, but everywhere, at all times. It is particularly relevant today when we are without any guidance, without any purpose in life, towards which we are to proceed consciously. That is why we find so much of conflict and misery. We are doing harm to ourselves because of our indifference towards this final objective in life.

What is our real nature? Our real nature, according to the scriptures, is perfect peace, harmony and knowledge. That is the ultimate objective. But we have lost sight of that and are only running about hither and thither and saying all the time that 'we are unhappy, we are unhappy'. Everywhere people repeat this refrain of modern life—'we are unhappy'. Even people who are supposed to have maximum amenities of life which should make one happy, say, 'we too are unhappy'. People come to us seeking happiness. How can we give them happiness when their life is not controlled?

If we ask them to control their minds they will laugh at us and say, 'Oh, if that is the panacea, then we are not going to have it'. They never tried to control their minds nor they had ever heard that such a thing was necessary. From our childhood we are used to hearing, 'you must acquire education, you must also learn science and technology, so that you can stand the keen competitions of today.' They are giving us ideas for making ourselves stronger than others, so that we may not be left behind, and dominated by others. But that is the way of competition only. And this competition is the mother of all sorts of conflict and misery. That is all that we are told today. But we do not have the patience of mind to practise what our sages have said about this kind of conflicts and their remedies. Great sages had enough knowledge to understand the intricate workings of the mind. Mind is constantly throwing up ideas which always distract us. We do not know how to check this flow of thoughts and desires constantly storming our minds, thus making us unhappy and unbalanced in all spheres of life. We do not know how to have a little calmer state of mind. We know that we are disturbed and that we are in conflict. We know that we are suffering from hypertension, as we often say. People are always trying to resort to some temporary means without going to the root of the problem. They do not follow the procedure which can undoubtedly free them from this kind of hypertension and conflict, free them from this tension of keen competition or rather brutal competition, in modern life. The theory of evolution, according to modern thinking, is based on the basic idea of this competition. Everywhere the slogan is, 'survival of the fittest'. And fittest means the strongest, the trickiest, and the most ruthless group of people who can dominate over others, and even survive by eliminating others. That is

the way in which we are being trained. But we know that this will not bring good to anybody, because this conflict will go on endlessly. Today we are dominating others. Tomorrow the table will turn and they will dominate over us. In this way, history consists of the rise and fall of great empires, great people who have tried to dominate over others. Ultimately these very people were dominated by those who had been under their thumbs. That is how the so-called 'struggle for existence' is going on. But that can never bring us lasting peace, and much less the individual peace which is the goal of every individual. We are trying to be happy, we are trying to be free from this kind of conflict, but then, we do not know how to solve this conflict. There are sages and saints who are talking to us from behind, 'My children, you are going in a wrong direction. First of all, you will have to control your passions, control your mind, and then only peace will come. Peace never comes by controlling others'. That is the way that we have to go, and Yoga will be a very important factor, an essential item in our life which will lead us to mental peace, and freedom from conflicts.

At the very outset, Yoga asks us to control our mind—*citta vrtti nirodha*. It means the quietening of the mind which is throwing up constantly wave after wave of thoughts, of desires, the *vrttis*. They are constantly rising from below the mind, from the depth, as it were, and we are helpless to check this flow of ideas which are distracting us. Now that has to be controlled in a methodical manner. No haphazard method will do it. We have to be wholehearted in that process. No trickery can be helpful in this manner. Yoga does not mean any kind of trickery, any kind of material achievement or gaining superiority over others by some tricks. What is necessary is a control over our passions, over our mind, over our

thought process, which alone can save us from this kind of distraction, this kind of misery. That is the aim the Yoga has for taking us out of this miserable existence of today. Mind has to be trained, and trained in a methodical manner, and that methodical manner will require our being established in absolute purity.

Purity and truthfulness are essentials for a Yogi. There are eight-fold paths of Yoga—Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi. That is so clearly stated that there cannot and should not be any kind of confusion, in the minds of the people. First of all, we must have control over our senses. We must have absolute purity and truthfulness. These are the absolutely necessary grounds on which the foundation of Yoga is built. This foundation can never be built by any kind of trickery, or breath control, or simply by some physical exercise. They can produce some results, but those results are not worth attaining. Because when the mind remains impure even if we have got certain supernatural powers, the powers will be only abused and finally spell ruin for us. Those powers are very difficult to control. A man with such powers is a dangerous man, not a Yogi. All these powers attained through trickery or physical control or even mental control, are not going to take us to any higher state of existence. They are not going to free us from the misery that we are suffering from. On the other hand, they will only make us worse than we are now. Sri Ramakrishna says that any kind of supernatural power is not a help, but a hindrance towards God realization. What is necessary is complete control over the senses and the mind, and a proper direction given to our life's journey towards the final goal, by the discriminating *buddhi*. That is what is absolutely necessary. So, Yoga does not mean any kind of physical control, or

physical exercise, nor even a mental exercise. That is why we have to clearly understand what is the purpose set before a Yogi. A Yogi must be one who has complete control over himself, and who has only good wishes for everybody and harms none. The preparatory steps like Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyama, Pratyāhāra are absolutely necessary in order to reach that highest state of consciousness, or Samādhi which is not merely stopping the mental processes for sometime, but which manifests the divine man within us for ever. That is what is the aim of Yoga and that has to be constantly remembered. Without that aim, if we try to practise Yoga we shall do more harm than good to ourselves and to society. We find individuals demonstrating the Āsanās in the streets, making people wonder. What has he achieved thereby? Has he become a better man? Has his mind become purer? Has he developed thereby sympathy for the whole world? Has he attained peace thereby? No. It is merely a sort of profession for earning money by duping people. We must realize that this is not Yoga. Yoga never meant that sort of trickery, performed in the streets for just earning money. Sri Ramakrishna once told a story about the acquiring of supernatural powers. There were two brothers. One brother left the house and went for spiritual practice. After twelve years he returned home and said, 'You see, I have achieved great powers'. Then the younger brother said, 'Yes brother, can you show what you have achieved?' 'Yes, come with me,' said the elder brother. Saying this, he went to a river, and then just walked over the water straight to the other side. Reaching the other side he saw the younger brother sailing by a boat to the same bank he had reached. The younger brother asked the elder brother, 'What have you achieved brother?' 'Did you not see, I crossed the river by walking over water?' answered the elder. The younger brother

then replied, 'Yes brother, I too crossed the same river by a boat and I had to pay only one pice for this trip. So what you have attained by your practice during these twelve years, is worth a pice.' These are the subtle truths we do not often understand. Gaining supernatural power is never the ambition of a Yogi. A Yogi wants to solve the problems of his life by making intense spiritual effort to become truthful, pure, compassionate, and thus attain the highest peace and bliss. He sets, before us an example so that by following his footsteps we also can solve our problems by raising ourselves from the level of the brutes to the status of the divine. This divinity within ourselves has to be given expression. And Yoga is the system which has given clearly intelligible means by which we can reach that state of complete divinity. That is the ambition of a Yogi. We should remember that, and evaluate all Yogis from that point of view. Has the Yogi achieved something by means of which he has got mastery over his senses? Has he been able to control the vagaries of his mind? Has he been filled with eternal peace undisturbed by any change in circumstances? Has he been a blessing to the world? These are the questions that have to be asked, and then only we know who a Yogi is. I would not go into details about it, because Yoga is a system that is meant not only for understanding, but more for practice. It requires a lifelong attempt to continue in such practices in order to reap the true benefit of Yoga. The so-called supernatural powers lead us nowhere.

I have given you just a summary of what Yoga should be and what it should not be. I hope, this will give you some idea. I know, you are attending to a series of lectures on Yoga. So I do not feel it necessary to go into further details. With these few remarks I take your leave.

# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA : MISSIONARY, SAINT OR PROPHET ?

DR. SATISH K. KAPOOR

'I have a message to the West as Buddha had a message to the East', said Swami Vivekananda.<sup>1</sup> Did he know that he was a second Buddha? Was the statement born of a prophetic vision or simple reason? Did it reflect only the sentimentality of an orator, or the deep anguish of a reformer? All this leads one to ask: Was Swami Vivekananda a missionary, saint, or a prophet?

A missionary is one who attempts to persuade or convert others to his position or principles in the land of his birth or outside<sup>2</sup>. Swami Vivekananda was not a missionary of the class in which we place William Carey<sup>3</sup> or Alexander Duff<sup>4</sup>. He remarked on many occasions that he did not go to the West to preach Hinduism. 'I was never a missionary nor ever would

be one—my place is in the Himalayas'<sup>5</sup>. He also said, 'I do not come to convert you to a new belief. I want to make the methodist a better methodist; the presbyterian, a better presbyterian; the unitarian a better unitarian. I want to teach you to live the truth, to reveal the light within your own soul.' Many American newspapers confirmed the truth of such utterances of the Swami. The correspondent of the *Appeal Avalanche*, for example, after interviewing him, remarked: 'He is here not to propagate the doctrines of any religion of India, and make converts to the same...' *Detroit Free Press* reported that 'the Indian exponent of divine doctrines made many converts in the Windy city'. At the same time the same journal noted 'an entire lack of the missionary spirit in the distinguished visitor.' To the interviewer, the Swami himself remarked that the Hindus never sought to thrust their religious views on others. He emphasized in most of his lectures in America and England that he was not on a proselytizing mission. 'They were Christian; it was well. He was a Hindu; that also was well. In his country different creeds were formulated for the needs of people of different grades of intelligence, all this marking the progress of spiritual evolution.' He ridiculed the system of 'bribing men to become Christians', and delineated the Hindu belief that conversion amounted to perversion.

By conversion the Christians meant 'the reorientation of the soul of an individual... a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right. It is seen

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta. Advaita Ashrama, 1970) vol. 5, p. 314 (Hereafter referred to as *Complete Works*)

2. *The Random House Dictionary* (College Edn) (New Delhi. Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1976) pp. 854-55.

3. A Baptist missionary of England (1761-1834) who pioneered the Christian missions to India in the latter part of 18th century. Through his influence 'The particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen' was formed in 1892. He translated the Bible into 24 Indian dialects besides compiling grammars and dictionaries of several languages. See W. Benham, *The Dictionary of Religion* (London, 1891) pp. 206-7.

4. A Scottish Presbyterian missionary who remained in Calcutta from 1830 to 1863 and did much to promote education and social reform. He was an inveterate critic of Hinduism and made some converts among the educated section of the people of Bengal. See Sachchidananda Bhattacharya, *A Dictionary of Indian History* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1967) pp. 315-16.

5. Swami Vivekananda's letter to Professor Wright, May 1894. See *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970) p. 97.



at its fullest in the positive response of a man to the choice set before him by the prophetic religions...' In its essence it was regarded as 'a turning away from a sense of present wrongness at least as much as a turning towards a positive ideal.' During his tour of the mid-western parts of America, Swami Vivekananda was often questioned whether he was going to convert the people. 'I take this for an insult', he retorted. 'I do not believe in this idea of conversion. Today we have a sinful man; tomorrow according to your idea he is converted and by and by attains unto holiness. Whence comes this change?'

It may be noted that Christianity has throughout been a missionary religion. The first records of the Church, as contained in the *Acts of the Apostles*, are almost entirely a narrative of the first Christian missions. Baron Von Welz went to Dutch Guiana to rouse a missionary spirit among the Lutherans. Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg and Henry Plutschau went to Tranquebar to spread the gospel of Christ. St. Columbinus of Leinster went to the mountainous region of the Vosges, near Besancon, to found the monasteries of Luxeuil and Fontaine. In England, 'The Society for the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts' was founded in 1701 by the Royal Charter 'for the religious instruction of the Queen's subjects beyond the Seas.' The Church Missionary Society was founded in 1799, to send missionaries to Asia and Africa. The United Congress of Missions which met on 28 September 1893 in the Columbus Hall of Chicago, appointed a committee to arrange an International Missionary Conference between the representatives of all the Evangelical Churches, to devise means for evangelizing the whole world. Ironically, Charles Carroll Bonney who was the chief architect of the World's Parliament of Religions presided over it. In his paper entitled 'Native Agencies—the chief hope of

National Evangelisation', Rev. J.T. Gracey of New York remarked that in India alone there were enough native Christians to evangelize the entire Empire. He prophesied that the day was not far off when Christianity would 'demolish forever the pagan religions.'

Swami Vivekananda's opposition to missionary enterprise must have come as a response to such designs of some proselytizing westerners. But he did not launch a counter proselytizing movement, though at times he argued that Vedanta could be the only universal religion. Does philosophy everywhere require missionaries? Vivekananda knew full well that truth will make its way everywhere. Darwin or Plato were no missionaries and yet the well known theories connected with their names have gained converts the world over. The printer and the postman are the greatest missionaries of the present day. A philosophy which has an intrinsic universal appeal wins its way in the world without any missionary help. Where eloquence and persuasion are necessary to appeal to the feelings and influence the conduct, there is always the need of a missionary. And Vedanta philosophy, of which Vivekananda himself was the embodiment, requires no more eloquence or personal influence. It is the realization of the philosophy that brings the power in the speaker. It is character which tells like a thunderbolt on the world. 'Out of silence and purity comes the word of power', said Vivekananda.

Was Swami Vivekananda a saint? The word is the gallicized form of the Latin *sanctus* which is the equivalent of the Greek *hagios*. The popular notion of the saint is that of a being of eminent holiness, who is one of the immediate disciples of an incarnation of God. The concept of saintliness pervades almost every religion of the world, whether ancient or contemporary. According to *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* saints are believed to be connected



in a special manner with what is viewed as sacred reality—gods, spiritual powers, mythical beings and other aspects of the sacred or holy. The religious person may have various relationships with the sacred : as seer, prophet, monk or other such personages. In the case of each of these however, a special kind of relationship is involved. Seers, for example, have an inspirational vision of the future ; prophets proclaim a revelation ; saviours are entrusted with effecting redemption, liberation or other salvatory conditions ; monks and nuns live religious life in accordance with ascetic regulations. Sainthood implies a special type of relationship to the holy, a relationship that is not automatically obtained by other religious personages through their performance of religious duties.<sup>6</sup> And so the terms saint and missionary convey different meanings and point to two different varieties of holy beings nurtured in different environments.

Swami Vivekananda was primarily a monk or *sannyāsin*. A monk, originally, is a product of the orient. The missionary, though originated with the expansion of Buddhism, thrived more in the occident ; the former must be renunciatory in worldly matters,<sup>7</sup> the latter may or may not be ; the former depends on his begging bowl, the latter may thrive on a salary ; the former is a mendicant at one time, a recluse at another but never a householder ; the latter has no such bindings. The essential traits of a monk or a *sannyāsin* are fearlessness, self-imposed poverty, purity, celibacy and pursuit of knowledge. Buddha became a monk in after life. Ramakrishna and Christ were monks all throughout.

Vivekananda described Jesus Christ as a *sannyāsin*. 'His religion is essentially fit for *sannyāsins* only', he said. 'His teachings may be summed up as : "Give up" ; nothing more being fit for the favoured few.'<sup>8</sup> And when this all-renouncing monk turns into a man of highest realization, he knows himself as separate and higher one than a mere body-mind complex. 'A person in the divine consciousness', says the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (5.8-9) 'although engaged in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving about, sleeping and breathing always knows within himself that he actually does nothing at all. Because while speaking, evacuating, receiving, opening or closing his eyes, he always knows that only the material senses are engaged with their objects and that he (the real self) is aloof from them.'

The criteria of sainthood, as understood in the West, are martyrdom, holiness of life, miracles in life and after death. Sometimes he leaves behind a popular cult. A saint must go through the process of canonization before being officially recognized as a saint. This tradition is never in vogue in the order of *sannyāsins*.

Swami Vivekananda never described himself as a saint but preferred to be called a *sannyāsin*, although as a *sannyāsin* he deviated, willingly, from some of the age-old customs. Many even argued that he was not a monk in the orthodox sense of the term for he crossed the Jambū-dvīpa, partook of the western food, and attended musical concerts. The missionaries in the West even accused him of moving freely with lady devotees.<sup>9</sup> But a truly realized soul ceases to see any distinction between man and woman. 'If the missionaries tell

6. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Macropaedia*, (Chicago: Helen Hemingway Benton, 1977) vol. 16, p. 163.

7. *The Bhagavad-Gītā* 9.28. 'By this principle of renunciation you will be liberated and come to me.'

8. *The Complete Works*, (1968) Vol. 6, p. 109.

9. In a letter to Diwanji Saheb written on 15 November 1894, he asserted: 'The Sannyasin has not lost a bit of his Sannyasinship, even his mode of living.' See *Complete Works* (1964), Vol. 8, p. 325.

you', he wrote to Alasinga, 'that I have ever broken the two great vows of the *sannyasin*—chastity and poverty—tell them that they are big liars.'<sup>10</sup> As regards taking food from the western homes he remarked : 'If the people want me to keep strictly to any Hindu diet, please tell them to send me a cook and money enough to keep him.'<sup>11</sup> Few would understand the deep significance of Swami Vivekananda's undertaking a sea voyage. Orthodox pundits were unaware of the global responsibilities which India ascribed to him as a guardian and rejuvenator of the Hindu religion. In a letter to Diwanji Saheb on 15 November 1894, Swami Vivekananda argued as to why a *sannyāsin* should go abroad. 'The only claim you have to be recognised in the world is your religion', he wrote, 'and good specimens of our religious men are required to be sent abroad to give other nations an idea that India is not dead. Some representative men must come out of India and go to all the nations of the earth to show at least that you are not savages. You may not feel the necessity of it from your Indian home, but believe me, much depends on that for your nation. And a *sannyāsin* who has no idea of doing good to his fellows is a brute, not a *sannyāsin*. I am neither a sightseer, nor an idle traveller ; but you will see, if you live to see, and bless me all your life.' It is impossible to imagine that the 19th century West would welcome an Indian monk in rags, with his head smeared with ash, his right hand holding a stick (*daṇḍa*) and his left hand a bowl (*kamaṇḍalu*). In Brooklyn they pulled Vivekananda by his turban, just out of mere 'curiosity'. The need of the time was to rise above the cramping superstitions, and work for mankind without confining oneself to local customs of India. 'I know my mission in

life', he wrote to Alasinga. 'I belong as much to India as to the world, no humbug about that.... What country has any special claim on me? Am I any nation's slave?'<sup>12</sup>

Naturally a question rises in our mind—was he not something more than a *sannyāsin*? Was he not a prophet? The theological definition of a prophet as being the anointed of God to teach the people, a soothsayer and a prognosticator of events, cannot always be authenticated by the tools of any historian. Common men can never know how a prophet ever heard the voice of the Almighty to lift up mankind. Swami Vivekananda never proclaimed himself a prophet like Bha'ullah nor did he preach because he had a revelation. Could he be classed with prophets and messiahs like Buddha and Christ? The incarnations of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa were recognized only by a few in the epic age. It would be pertinent to remark that Christ's prophethood was established centuries after his death. A century has yet to elapse after the death of Swami Vivekananda.

The modern definition of a prophet as 'a man who experiences a sudden and profound dissatisfaction with things as they are, is fired with a new idea and launches out on a new path in a sincere conviction that he has been led by something external and objective....' amply fits the life of Swami Vivekananda. 'Every prophet has a message', says A.D. Nock, 'which he feels an inward and instant impulse to deliver. He can do nothing else ; the truth has been vouchsafed to him'. Vivekananda once remarked : 'There were times in older days when prophets were many in every society. The time is to come when prophets will walk through every street in every city of the world.... And the whole question devolves upon us : "Do we want to be

10. *The Complete Works* (1973), Vol. 5, p. 95

11. *Ibid*

12. *Ibid*.

prophets? If we want, we shall be." <sup>13</sup> To the West lost in the slough of materialism, and to India buried under centuries of inertia, he spoke on different wavelengths and delivered separate messages.

Swami Vivekananda was not an apologist for everything Indian. Nor did he make a wholesale condemnation of everything western. Like a true prophet he saw the East and the West as the two halves of human consciousness—the two channels of energy—the *yin* and the *yan*, the *ida* and the *pingala* through which the cosmic power flowed. The one was relatively dynamic and restless, the other basically quiescent and meditative; the one relied too much on reason, the other depended too much on faith; the one yearned for progress in the material world, the other searched within for peace. Both were in a state of incompleteness. By themselves they were incomplete, partial and insular. Hence each must take an existential leap in the missing dimension of its consciousness, get in touch with its 'complementary opposite', exchange notes on areas of mutual interest, and create a balance between spirituality and material progress.

Only a prophet of the stature of Swami Vivekananda could welcome the global rise of working classes. His prophetic words uttered long before the Russian or the Chinese revolution strike us with wonder even today, 'Let new India arise.... Let her arise—out of peasants' cottages, grasping the plough, out of the huts of fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper. Let her spring from grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from groves and forests, from hills and mountains.' In Ramnad, where he landed on the *Punyabhūmi Bhāratavarsa* after his triumphant success in the West, he sang in prophetic tone the saga of the future of

India: 'The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking and a voice is coming to us—away back where history and even tradition fails to peep into the gloom of the past, coming down from there, reflected as it were from peak to peak of the infinite Himalaya of knowledge, and of love and of work, India, this motherland of ours—a voice is coming unto us, gentle, firm, and yet unmistakable in its utterances, and is gaining volume as days pass by, and behold, the sleeper is awakening! Like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles: the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, or the perverted will not see, that she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet.'<sup>14</sup>

Today the global rise of India, despite many problems, is a fact. And Vivekananda saw this great and independent rejuvenation of our motherland at a time when the bravest and the best of Indians were at the most thinking of a peaceful survival under a foreign domination. Only a visionary like Vivekananda could predict the coming revolution in Russia and China, much to the unbelief of his listeners. Only a seer like Vivekananda could prophesy the rise of the religion of Vedanta as the spiritual anodyne of the future world tormented by the poisons of a materialistic civilization. Only a Vivekananda could see the emergence of a new generation of 'supermen' and 'superwomen' who would combine in their lives the western dynamism and Indian spirituality. Today each of his words has come true. What shall we call him who made all these infallible prophecies?

13. *The Complete Works* (1968), Vol 6, pp. 10-11.

14. *The Complete Works* (1964) Vol. 3 pp 145-46.

## ABBOT WILLIAM OF SAINT-THIERRY

FR. M. BASIL PENNINGTON, O.C.S.O.

In their study of the thousand years of the history of the Abbey of Saint Thierry, France, scholars seem to agree that the hour of glory for the monastery on Mount Hor coincides with the fourteen years that William of Liege sat in the abbot's chair. If we were to ask William what he considered to be his greatest achievement during those years, his response would be a personal one, a subjective one. All his writings prepare us for this. He would say that the most important thing he did during those years was to become a contemplative, a man, a monk who truly sought God. If we pressed him further, and asked what he thought was his greatest achievement precisely as *abbot*, I think he would reply: 'To have opened the transcendent life to my monks'.

Historians might have answered the question for William differently, perhaps giving an answer which we would think to be more objective. Most would probably point to his leadership at the Benedictine reform chapters as his great achievement, or the whole of his activity in fostering monastic renewal.

But if we reflect a little more, we will perhaps see the validity of William's answer (or my guesses as to what would be his answer). For, behind all that he accomplished in his community and his ability to accomplish at home and abroad was his own personal monastic life with its depth and quality of transcendent understanding and life.

### *A Literary Heritage*

It is possible to marshal a certain number of historical facts concerning the life of

William of Saint Thierry and his abbatial rule. Yet the image they portrayed for us would remain fairly hollow if we could not gain access to his thought, and above all, to his spirituality. We are indeed fortunate, especially when we consider the paucity of manuscripts in the tradition, that we do have in our hands today so many of William's spiritual writings.

I would see this as a special disposition of a very benign Providence who knew not only the great need of our times but how exceptionally well the very personal, open and existential writings of the Abbot of Saint Thierry would respond to our needs. Without hesitation the seeker of the late twentieth century can turn to these writings and find in them a very relevant and helpful guide and spiritual master. We too can turn to them in our quest to learn how William himself strove to live. For, what Gregory the Great said of Saint Benedict is no doubt equally true of William: 'Anyone who wishes to know more about his life and character can discover in his Rule (his writings) exactly what he was like as an abbot, for his life could not have differed from his teaching.'

We can, I believe, trace out William's own spiritual itinerary through his writings. Around 1119 he paid his first visit to Bernard of Clairvaux. It was for him a profound experience which had a lasting effect on his life, as we can easily see by the way he wrote of it some thirty years later. It was in a way a conversion experience and came on the eve of another great change in his life, his election as abbot of Saint Thierry. Coming into contact with a man who so uniquely embodied the transcendent ideal of the Christian tradition, William's thoughts and aspirations turned in that direction.

### *To Seek His Face*

My concern in this particular paper is to indicate something of the way William traced out for his men as their spiritual father. He was very conscious of a divine call to serve his monks as spiritual father. Again and again in his writings he speaks of his willing reluctance to leave aside his own leisure and enjoyment of the delights of contemplation in order to serve his sons and lead them into those same delights.

The path he sought to trace out for his followers and along which he strode is illumined by the face of God. This expression, drawn especially from the Psalms, is central and constant in his spiritual writings. Its meaning and significance are perhaps most fully and concisely developed in the third of William's *Meditations*, those soliloquies which he considered apt 'for forming novices' minds to prayer'. By God's grace William finds himself drawn in this safe and sure way of life and points it out to his reader :

I seek your face, by your own gift I seek your countenance. I know indeed and I am sure that those who walk in the light of your countenance do not fall but walk in safety, and by your face their every judgment is directed. They are the living people, for their life is lived according to that which they read and see in your face as in an exemplar.

What precisely does William mean when he speaks of seeking the face of God? What is he looking for, to what way is he pointing? He himself in the same *Meditation* asks this question: 'By your almightiest goodness, Lord, I pray you, by your most tender patience toward us, yield something to my quest, and tell my soul what she desires when she seeks your face.' And in response we hear that the Triune God, through the Holy Spirit, 'reveals himself to any friend of God on whom he would bestow especial honour', so that he sees God

'as the Father sees the Son, or the Son the Father . . . but not in every way the same'.

There is trace of an apophysis in William's teaching: '... reason cannot see God except in what he is not.... What, indeed, can reason grasp, however hard it may try, of which it dare say, "This is my God"? It can discover what he is only by inferring from what it knows him not to be.... That knowledge is best known in this life by unknowing; the highest knowledge that a man can here and now attain consists in knowing in what way he does not know.'

Yet, essentially, William's way is a way of light, filled with illuminating grace. As William immediately went on to say in this same *Meditation*:

And yet, O Lord, though you have made the darkness of our ignorance and human blindness the secret place that hides your face from us, nevertheless your pavilion is round about you, and some of your saints undoubtedly were full of light. They glowed and they gave light, because they lived so close to your light and your fire. By word and example they kindled and enlivened others, and they declared to us the solemn joy of this supreme knowledge of you, for which we look hereafter, when we shall see you as you are, and face to face. Meanwhile, through them the lightnings of your truth have illumined the world, and flashes have shone forth that rejoice those whose eyes are sound; although they trouble and perturb those who love darkness rather than light.

William not only wanted to have 'sound eyes', he wanted to be and was one of those saints 'full of light' who 'kindled and enlightened others'.

William speaks beautifully, with much feeling, about the human face of Christ Jesus. He was certainly one with Saint Bernard in his tender devotion to the Passion of Christ. Meditation on the Passion was important in William's teaching, especially for the beginner in his efforts to control his many thoughts—a kind of plague of flies that erupts into one's eyes and almost

drives one out of his own house. In his very practical advice on this matter, William tells how one is to call to mind and summon to his aid those thoughts that he has drawn out of the Saviour's wells.

Yet, like the other Cistercian Fathers, William is quick to quote St. Paul : 'Even if we did once know Christ in the flesh, that is not how we know him now'. If we, 'attracted to the human form of him who is one Person with the Son of God, develop a sort of carnal devotion, we do not err'. For, as William 'confidently asserts' in speaking to the Lord :

It was not the least of the chief reasons for your incarnation that your babes in the Church, who still need your milk rather than solid food, who are not strong enough spiritually to think of you in your own way, might find in you a form not unfamiliar to themselves. In the offering of their prayers they might set this form before themselves, without any hindrance to faith, while they are still unable to gaze into the brightness of the majesty of your divinity. Yet in so doing we do retard and hinder spiritual prayer.

William himself, however, wanted to 'wholly enter into Jesus' very heart', for it was 'the holy of holies, the ark of the covenant, the golden urn, the soul of our humanity that holds within itself the manna of the Godhead...' He wanted to see the very face of God. For to see God is faith's proper desire. But how is this to come about ?

First of all, one must go beyond, or leave off all images, thoughts and concepts.

Of what avail are mental images ? Can reason, or rational understanding, effect anything ? No. For, although reason sends us to you, O God, it cannot of itself attain to you. Neither does that understanding which, as a product of reason, has lower matter for its sphere of exercise, go any farther than does reason itself ; it is powerless to attain you.

One must turn to the other eye of spiritual vision : 'There are two eyes of the spiritual

vision forever straining to see the Light which is God, and their names are love and reason.'

The 'soul's sense is love ; by love it perceives whatever it perceives. Love leaves behind what God is not, and rejoices to lose itself in what he is'. When the lover reaches out in this way, a certain change takes place in him by which he is transmuted into the Object loved : he does not become the same nature as that Object, but by his affection he is conformed to what he loves. For William this is the work of the Holy Spirit. The common Will and mutual Love of the Father and the Son, he is given to us to make us like God, seeing the Father as the Son sees him, and seeing the Son as the Father sees the Son, and to unite us to them. Thus the image of God is restored in us.

O Charity, Charity, you have brought us to this that, because we love God and the Son of God, we are called and we are gods and the sons of God.

And yet we are never to say 'It is enough !' 'It does not yet appear what we shall be'. Whatever awareness we have here of seeing God, whatever faith here teaches us about him, is a riddle, darker at times, indeed, at others clearer. This connatural knowledge or understanding which comes from above controls the believing mind when and as far as the Holy Spirit wills. He serves to soothe the lover, for there is clearly nothing in it of that which is not God, and although it is not wholly what God is, it is not different from the Reality.

Thus William portrays the deepest, fullest and richest meaning of Christian life in a very simple and direct way. He invites his disciples to begin with meditation on the human life of Christ, and through his blessed passion to come into contact with the divine love which it preeminently reveals. Love calls forth love and the love called



forth transforms the lover into the likeness of the Beloved, a likeness which changes communion into union with the Triune. So simply then does William trace out the way and express the call to transforming union.

### *The Monastic Context*

Yet this love affair does not develop in a vacuum. And William is well aware of it. The monastic way of life is there to create a climate most favourable to fostering its growth.

The 'labour of obedience' is an essential element. William has the Lord address these words to him :

I will go before you, and you must follow as you see me go before. I endured and laboured and you must labour too. I suffered many things ; it behoves you, too, to suffer some. Obedience is the way to charity, and you will get there if you keep to it.

Especially does he exhort the beginner to walk in this way. The neophyte does not yet have the knowledge and experience he needs and so he must submit his judgement to one who knows the way if he wishes not to be lost. But if he is to be severe with himself in being gently and obediently humble toward the fathers and brothers who guide him, they are to moderate his severity and be properly indulgent, lest he loses heart.

Furthermore, he is to be supported by the exercises of the common life. Lofty though his spiritual doctrine be, summoning his disciples to the very heights, William fully appreciated the importance of a well-moderated daily observance. In his well-developed treatise on love he speaks explicitly of the role of the various monastic practices, great and small, in the way of obedient love :

The beginner in obedience must embrace cleanness of heart, purity of body, and silence, or well controlled speech. His eyes must not wander. He must not look proud. His ears

must not be itching to hear. If he is temperate in food and sleep, he will not hinder the efficacy of a diet of good works. His hands should be held in check and his gait should be quiet. Lewdness of heart should not burst out in a loud laugh, but a sweet smile should show its grace. He must be conscientious in reading and meditation—and these should be spiritual and not prompted by mere curiosity. He must show subjection to his superiors ; he must reverence the elder brethren and cherish the younger ones. He must not wish to be in a position of authority, but must love to be commanded. He must wish to be useful to everyone. He must not let severity overwhelm him, nor mildness make him soft. Let him have cheerfulness in his face and sweetness in his heart towards all, and kindness in all his acts. For this is the time and place for sloughing off sensuality, for rooting out vice and breaking self-will..let him who loves the more run the faster.

As the beginner progresses, the role of the observances as factors fostering formation and development will become less significant. They will become more the expressions of fraternal love and harmony.

But even though one hold steadfastly to the labour of obedience and the exercises of the common life and be free from the burdens of past sin, he does not always progress steadily on the way of love. 'For so long as "the body that is subject to corruption weighs down the soul, and the earthly habitation presses down the mind that muses upon many things", the soul is bound to experience vicissitudes, however much it loves'. For, as William says to the Lord :

As I see it, love is a natural thing, but to love you belongs to grace ; the feeling of love is a manifestation of grace, and of that the Apostle says: 'To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal.. In the soul of your poor servant, therefore, Lord, your love is always present ; but it is hidden like the fire in the ashes till the Holy Spirit, who blows where he wills, is pleased to manifest it profitably in the way and to the extent he wishes.'

Thus as one makes his way along this path of transforming love, seeking the face



of God, obedience and docility to the Holy Spirit are essential. God's ways are not always those that men would spontaneously choose.

William certainly experienced this. He had to cope constantly with a frustrated desire for greater contemplative leisure as the 'truth of love' summoned him to the service of his sons and brothers. He sums up his balanced understanding of the matter in *Meditation Eleven* :

Let us review our affections and actions. Let our affections be set on the centre of truth, and then outward actions will correspond thereto—Every affection is indeed owed to God. When he is adhered to faithfully, wherever the circle of activity revolves, it cannot err... Affection is sufficient if circumstances do not demand action or the possibility of acting is lacking. For, when the demands of love require action, true charity owes it to God or to a neighbour, as the case may be; if necessity does not require it, the love of truth makes it our duty to hold ourselves at leisure for itself. And as we always owe our entire affection to God, so also when we are at leisure, we owe our whole activity to him. . But anyone whom need summons to action must not be so eager to perform that he fails to take stock of his own ability. The centre of truth must be consulted as to whether he has the ability to do it. If he has not, and yet presumes to act, he is not cleaving to the centre. Let him from whom action is urgently demanded, if indeed he can perform it, fix his attention on the truth, and not refuse to do the act of service. If the truth, when consulted, tells him he is unequal to the task and no fit person for it, then let him fix his soul in stillness on the stability of truth. .

It must be admitted though that although William taught and lived a doctrine that preserved the true balance and relationship between holy leisure and fruitful activity, yet he places relatively little emphasis on community life. This is no doubt influenced by his own eremitical leanings.

Yet, in his *ex professo* treatise on love, the Abbot does not fail to develop this essential dimension of Christian charity.

To cite just one very beautiful expression of this :

Likewise the holy souls of whom we speak, if made superiors, acquit themselves of their office with all solicitude, and are like fathers to their sons. But if they are made subject to others, then they obey with humility and are like sons to their fathers. If they are obliged to live with others, they do so with charity. If they live in community, they make themselves the servants of all. They are lovingly inclined towards everyone, and live in peaceful agreement about all that is good. They come together with joy, and go out of their way to show charity towards one another. To those who are below them in any way, they show a tender affection in their deeds. On their elders they bestow love to the point of subjection. To those above them their obedience goes as far as slavery. They do not seek their own interests, but those of the brethren. Whenever possible they make the common good their own, in spite of detriment to themselves. For they have received that pledge which is the Holy Spirit's gift, and they know that bodily service will soon pass into the adoption of those who will be revealed as the sons of God. Therefore they find it easy to bend both body and will to whatsoever thing the greatest of commandments orders.

And later in the same treatise he becomes almost lyrical as he describes the effect on the community life of a full living out of the way of love.

These brethren find that the least touch (of Divine Wisdom) carries such an incitement to charity that their monastery becomes a very paradise of spiritual delight. Their transfigured faces and bodies, their holy life and behaviour, their mutual service and devotion, so bind each brother to his brothers that their hearts and souls cannot but be one. The future glory, which will be perfect in the life to come, stands revealed in them already.

Thus we see that for Abbot William the search for the face of God was to be lived out in and supported by a monastic milieu created by obedience, monastic observance, conversion, docility to the Holy Spirit,

contemplation and active service in a community of brothers.

### Conclusion

In these pages I have relied almost exclusively on the writings that date to William's abbatial service. Many texts from his later writings could be brought forward to underline the doctrine found here. During the ensuing years, his doctrine was deepened

and enriched until it was set forth in a somewhat different framework in that masterful synthesis which has rightly been called the *Golden Epistle*. Yet in this earlier teaching I do not think there is any essential of that later synthesis lacking. And certainly there is, as I hope my brief presentation has indicated, a teaching that is more than sufficient to inspire and lead a community of monks to the fullest experience of Christian life and mysticism.

### *They Lived with God*

## MANINDRA KRISHNA GUPTA

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

A man prays to God for what he loves most. A lover of wealth prays for money; a lover of name and fame prays for recognition; a lover of pleasure prays for enjoyments; a lover of aesthetics prays for beauty; a lover of the body prays for good health; a lover of knowledge prays for intellectual pursuits. Most people love God's powers, but few love God. We do not realize that if we seek God, we will attain God as well as the wisdom and strength to handle worldly success. If, however, we seek only success and power, we may get them, but eventually they become a bondage.

Once Sri Ramakrishna asked Manindra Krishna Gupta: 'What do you want?' 'I want to express my ideas about the beauty of the world and human nature—that is my desire', replied the young Manindra. 'That is fine', said Sri Ramakrishna with a smile. 'But if you realize God, you will achieve everything.'

In 1870 Manindra Krishna Gupta was born in Calcutta. His grandfather, Ishwar Chandra Gupta, was a famous poet. Manindra's family was related not only to 'M', the recorder of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, but also to Keshab Chandra Sen, the famous Brahmo leader. After Sri Ramakrishna and Keshab met, the Master's name quickly spread among the followers of the Brahmo Samaj as well as the younger generation of Bengal. Upendra Krishna Gupta (Manindra's elder brother), Karunamay Sen (Keshab's son), Brahmabandhav Upadhyay (Bhavani Charan Bandopadhyay), and other young Brahmos rented a house and formed a group called 'Youngmen's Nest'. These leaders used to teach young boys religion, morality, ethics, literature, and social work.

During the summer vacation or any holiday, Brahmabandhav would visit Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar with his friends. Since Brahmabandhav had great

affection for the young boys, he never missed opportunity to invite them. Thus Manindra met Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar, probably in 1882. In his own words, he reminisced :

I was then about eleven or twelve years old. I remember that we used to go on a big boat and that the trip on the Ganga was very pleasant. When we had landed at Dakshineswar, we would bathe either in the Ganga or in the pond—swimming, splashing, and having lots of fun.

Afterwards we would assemble on the northern verandah of Sri Ramakrishna's room. The Master would put out an assortment of offered sweets, fruits, sugar candy syrup, and other delicacies, and he himself would invite us to partake of them. Thus I saw him several times, but all I remember is his sweet and affectionate manner.

After partaking of the *prasād*, our senior members would listen to the teachings of the Master while we youngsters would play in the temple garden or sometimes just rest in the Panchavati.

One day, out of curiosity, I peeped through the eastern door of the Master's room. He was seated on his small cot and I can still remember that he had a small bag containing cinnamon, cloves, and other spices. Now and then as he talked he would take a few of them and put them in his mouth. I don't remember what he was talking about, but one thing I do remember: Pointing to the young audience in his room, he said: 'Look, here is a gathering of bright jewels'. I was so impressed seeing his beautiful, loving face, that I could not turn to look in any other direction. I stood there for some time, forgetting everything. When my other companions left his room and moved towards the boat, I followed them.

Because of his father's work, Manindra's family moved to Bhagalpur, so he was not able to see the Master for three years. Then he returned to Calcutta where he enrolled in school. Caring very little for the school curriculum, he used to study art and literature at home. Soon his guardians discovered that Manindra, instead of going to school, was visiting the eastern part of Calcutta to enjoy the natural beauty of the

meadow and canal. They scolded him, but could not change his attitude.

In September of 1885, Sri Ramakrishna moved to Shyampukur, Calcutta, for his cancer treatment. One afternoon Sarada Baba, an acquaintance of Manindra's, asked him, 'Would you like to go with me on a visit?' Manindra had previously accompanied him on walks through the countryside, so he agreed. Seeing that Manindra had misunderstood, Sarada explained further: 'But today I am not going for a walk. Sri Ramakrishna is now living in a house at Shyampukur. Let us go and see him.' Immediately Manindra dressed properly and the two left for Shyampukur.

When they arrived there, Sri Ramakrishna was in his room with 'M.' and Swami Vivekananda. The Master was reclining on his bed, facing north. As soon as Manindra and Sarada entered, the Master rose, and they saluted him. Sri Ramakrishna looked intently at Manindra, then beckoned him to come closer. He smiled a little and whispered: 'Come alone tomorrow. Don't come with him.' Sarada could not hear what the Master had said.

Later, on their way home, Sarada, out of curiosity, asked Manindra, 'What did he say to you?' Manindra was a little hesitant to tell him what the Master had actually said, so he gave a passing answer, 'Well, the Master asked me to visit him another day'. 'My boy, your luck is good', said Sarada. 'He did not talk to me at all.'

On his way home, Manindra felt an irresistible attraction to the Master. It was hard for him to sleep that night, and a strange thing happened. He continually saw Sri Ramakrishna's smiling face all around him and heard his voice saying, 'Come alone tomorrow'. Manindra wrote in his memoirs :

Some may think that because I was then a teenage boy, my description is somewhat

exaggerated. But please remember that truth never changes with the passing of time, nor does one's experience. The joy of seeing the moon when one is young is the same as the joy of seeing it when one is old. At any rate, I remember vividly that I had struggled to sleep the whole night and that it was not until the early hours of the morning that I finally fell asleep.

The next afternoon I started again for Shyampukur. I saw 'M.' and some other devotees in the Master's room. It appeared to me that the Master knew of my coming and was waiting to receive me. Before I could sit down, he asked everyone to leave the room and for me to come sit near him.

'Where have you been for so long?' he asked. Saying this, the Master burst into tears. He addressed me as though I were a near and dear relative. He touched me, and I noticed a slight smile on his face. Then all of a sudden, his body became stiff like a corpse. I remained motionless. What was this? Never having seen *samādhi* before, I knew nothing about it and was quite at a loss. I checked his breath, but could detect no sign of it. His eyes were half-closed and his eyelids were motionless.

After fifteen minutes, I saw that he was gradually returning to normal consciousness. Then, touching my chest, he muttered something and asked me in a deep voice, 'What do you want?'

Manindra had the feeling that the Master would give him anything he wanted. But there is a saying: 'If a husking machine goes to heaven, it continues to husk there.' Manindra was a boy of poetry and imagination. He loved the beauty of nature. Without considering the pros and cons, he spontaneously voiced his desire to express his feelings about beauty.

Manindra then began to cry. The Master asked the devotees to take him to the next room. It took them half an hour to stop him from crying and to bring him down from that emotional experience. After that, Manindra became a frequent visitor to the Master and began to serve him under the direction of Swami Vivekananda, who was then the leader of the Master's young disciples.

As Manindra was one of the youngest in the group, the disciples and devotees called him 'Khoka' (young boy). There were not sufficient accommodations for several attendants in the small Shyampukur house, so Manindra would serve Sri Ramakrishna during the day and spend the night at Ram Chandra Datta's house. Gradually he became well known among the devotees of the Master.

One night during the fall of 1885, there was a meteor shower in Calcutta. The next evening Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar visited Sri Ramakrishna as usual. While there, Dr. Sarkar and other devotees discussed in English the meteor shower in front of the Master. Manindra was present and he reminded them that the Master could not understand what they were talking about, since he did not know English. Sri Ramakrishna looked at them blankly, then slowly went into *samādhi*.

Gradually the Master returned to the normal plane and said: 'Hello, what are you talking about? I saw a meteor shower in this vast universe which is pervaded by Brahman. Are you talking about that?' The devotees, especially Dr. Sarkar, were amazed to hear these words of the Master. But Sri Ramakrishna was very much against miracle-mongering. Once he said: 'Look, if you see that a monk is trying to show his miraculous powers, know for certain that he does not have an iota of spirituality. He is a hypocrite.'

Manindra also recorded another interesting incident which occurred at the Shyampukur house:

One day the Master was returning from the bathroom to his room, which was across the verandah. I was waiting for him on the northern verandah, and I also followed him. I noticed that Ram Chandra Datta and some other devotees entered the Master's room. Seeing Ram, the Master said: 'Hello, Ram. Just now I had a vision of a monk with a well-built body who was

wearing an ochre loin cloth. I have never seen him before.'

Ram replied with a smile: 'Sir, what do we know? You see so many things in heaven and earth—how can we comprehend them all?' 'Really I have seen a monk', said the Master. 'But I don't know who he is.' My memory of that simple, childlike statement is still vivid. Then the subject was dropped. Slowly the Master sat down on his bed. Ram and other devotees sat in front of him. I sat in the room adjacent to the Master's, which was near the steps. About an hour later, I saw a man come upstairs. He wore a black shirt and a black cap. It seemed to me that he was a native of Bihar. He asked me: 'Sir, does Ramakrishna Paramahansa live here? I have come to see him. Could I see him right away?' 'Of course', I replied. 'Please follow me'. I took him to the Master's room.

After sitting there quietly for a while, he said to the Master: 'Sir, I am a Christian, and for a long time I have meditated in solitude on Christ. Though I am a Christian and my Chosen Deity is Christ, my mode of worship is like the Hindus, and I believe in their yoga scriptures. Once I had a desire to find someone who had attained the highest spiritual realization while still in the world. One day in meditation, I saw two persons. I had the strong feeling that one of them had attained the highest, and that the other one, seated at his feet, though he had not yet reached the highest, was not an ordinary person.

'After this vision, I felt certain that such great souls must exist, but where were they, and how could I find them? I travelled to many places, especially in the western part of India, seeking the two I had seen in my vision. At last I heard of Pavhari Baba of Ghazipur, and I went to see him. But when I met him, I was greatly disappointed, because he bore no resemblance whatsoever to either of the two men I was seeking. But to my astonishment, I saw a picture of one of them hanging on the wall in his room. When I asked Pavhari Baba about it, he said it was a picture of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Eagerly I asked, "Where can I find him?" Then Pavhari Baba told me that for many years he had lived at Dakshineswar, but was now very ill and had been moved to Calcutta for treatment by his devotees. So I am here, having come to Calcutta at Pavhari Baba's suggestion.'

Then the man went on to say, 'These clothes

in which you see me are not my usual dress'. And as he spoke he stood up and removed his outer garments, revealing an ochre cloth. Instantly the Master also stood up and went into *samādhi*, raising his hand, as it is seen in the picture of Christ. At this, the monk knelt down before him with folded hands and looked intently at Sri Ramakrishna. The monk was shedding tears and was shivering.

We were all amazed to see the spiritual moods of both. And as my gaze again fell on his ochre cloth, I wondered: 'Is this the holy man in ochre dress whom the Master had seen in his vision?'

After some time, the Master came back to normal consciousness and sat on his bed. The monk looked at us, his face beaming with joy, and exclaimed, 'Today I am blessed'. Then he continued more calmly: 'As you see, this inner cloth is my regular dress, and it is also my favourite dress because it is worn by the yogis of India. I was born in a brahmin family, and even though I am a Christian, why should I give up the traditions of my ancestors? I have great faith in our Indian manners and customs.'

Then we took him to an adjacent room, where Swami Vivekananda offered him prasād and food. Finally, we asked the monk\* to tell us the cause of his ecstasy. 'Well', he replied, 'today I saw the one on whom I have meditated for so many years. I saw Lord Jesus in him'.

At Shyampukur, though the Master's illness was growing more serious every day, people flocked to him in greater numbers in order to satisfy their spiritual longing. Manindra, Sarada (later, Swami Trigunatitananda), and other newcomers received special instruction from the Master during this time. Because Manindra's nature was soft and emotional, he used to dance in ecstasy on hearing the Lord's name. On October 30, 1885, Sri Ramakrishna said to 'M.': 'Manindra has an element of *prakṛti*, of womanliness. He has read the life of Caitanya and has understood the attitude of the *gopīs*. He has also realized that God is *Puruṣa* and man is *prakṛti*, and

\*The monk's name was Prabhudayal Mishra. His birthplace was in the western part of India, and he belonged to the Quaker sect in Christianity.

that man should worship God as His handmaid. How remarkable !'

On 6 November 1885, the devotees made arrangements for Kālī Pūja according to the direction of the Master. Doctor Sarkar and several other devotees visited the Master, and the doctor asked to hear some songs. 'M.', Girish, and Kalipada sang, and while listening to their songs, Manindra and Latu entered into a spiritual mood.

After Sri Ramakrishna moved again to Cossipore, following the advice of his doctors, Manindra took an active part in serving him. The Holy Mother once mentioned an incident which happened there : 'When the Master was sick, Manindra and Paltu [two teenage devotees of the Master] were fanning him. It was the day of the *Holi festival* [an auspicious day when Kṛṣṇa played with the *gopīs* with coloured dyes], and all were playing with the colours outside. The Master repeatedly asked the two boys to join in the festival, but they continued to stay and serve the Master. Seeing their love and devotion, the Master exclaimed, "Look, these boys are my Rāmlāla [the child Rāma]."'

Manindra was well aware that Sri Ramakrishna was his *guru* and Chosen Deity. But when Kumud Bandhu Sen once asked Manindra about his initiation, he was told : 'One day I was seated near the Master. Mahim Chakrabarty was present at that time, and he said to the Master : "Last night I saw in a dream that I was giving a *mantra* to Manindra according to your direction." The Master asked him to repeat the *mantra*. As soon as Mahim Chakrabarty did so, the Master went into *samādhi*. Afterwards, when he came down to the normal plane, he asked Mahim to give me that *mantra*.'

After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, Manindra put on the ochre cloth

at the behest of Mahim Chakrabarty and lived with him. He always kept in close contact with the monastic disciples of the Master, who were then at the Baranagore monastery. Later he returned home, married, and had several children.

Though Manindra did not finish his schooling, he continued his studies under the supervision of a private tutor until his marriage. His tutor was a brilliant man, and it was through his efforts that Manindra became proficient in literature. Manindra's grandfather, Ishwar Chandra Gupta, had founded a daily newspaper, *Sambād Prabhākar*, which was later inherited by Manindra's father. Since Manindra was reluctant to accept outside work for a living, his guardians encouraged him to edit and manage the newspaper. Through this work, he became acquainted with the famous writers of Bengal—Suresh Chandra Samajpati, Akshay Kumar Baral, and others.

Gradually Manindra became involved in the theatre, and he began to write dramas. As a result, the newspaper was neglected. Unfortunately, he did not appear to have any significant talent in playwriting, so his financial condition soon became critical. In 1897, when Swami Vivekananda returned to India from the West, he came to know of Manindra's financial difficulties and asked Swami Brahmananda to give Manindra twelve hundred rupees so that his family would not starve. While accepting the gift, Manindra burst into tears at the thought of Swamiji's generosity and love for him.

Manindra would visit Alambazar Math, Belur Math, Dakshineswar, and Yogodyana regularly. On auspicious occasions, he would arrange a festival of Sri Ramakrishna at his house and invite devotees. He kept in close touch with the monastic and householder disciples of the Master. Holy Mother was very fond of Manindra, and it was due to his influence that several members of his family received initiation from her.



During the later part of his life, when his sons became capable of earning money themselves, Manindra's financial condition improved. Quite often he would visit 'M.' and Swamis Saradananda and Shivananda. At Swami Saradananda's request, Manindra wrote his reminiscences of the Master, and it was published serially in the *Udbodhan* (Vol. 38 to Vol. 41).

After retirement, he spent most of his

time thinking and talking about Sri Ramakrishna. Although his outer life had not been very successful, his inner life blossomed through the grace of the Master. Whenever Manindra would speak of Sri Ramakrishna and his devotees, his eyes would fill with tears of joy. Manindra passed away in 1939 at the age of sixty-nine at his Calcutta residence. He was a simple, sincere, and humble soul.

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

### *Peacelessness in Punjab*

Punjab is burning. 'The holiest even in holy Aryavarta', as Vivekananda once called Punjab, is today in deep agony. This is the land where ages before the Vedas and the Upanishads were written on the banks of five rivers. These are the heroic people who shed their blood in the past in order to protect India, her culture, her religion and above all her sovereignty. Alexander had to return from Punjab. Other foreign invaders faced the toughest resistance in these areas. Punjab stood as the sleepless sentinel of India throughout history. Even today Punjab holds and maintains the granary for the nation.

This Punjab is in flames today. Since the beginning of this decade, the equilibrium of life in this land is lost. Killings and counter-killings have severely shaken the sense of security in the people. Vested interests, parading of weapons in the holy precincts of religion, and fundamentalism are creating havoc. Above all, a persistent and cold-blooded terrorism, the dreaded disease of modern politics, have brought a rift between so long friendly communities of the Sikhs and the Hindus. The rift seems to be widening day by day. Communities which never knew the slightest disharmony, and which lived in perfect peace and unity throughout centuries are today polarized. Dialogue is virtually stopped. Resentment and suspicion reign everywhere. Even the closest friends and neighbours have lost trust in each other. Death is stalking high on the streets of Punjab. People are living unpredictable moments at the mercy of stenguns. Despite all possible assurances and active steps taken by the state and central

governments, the solution to Punjab crisis seems to be receding. Despite peace-marches, pada-yatras, intellectuals' appeals and social workers' desperate attempts, peace is no where in sight.

Why? What has really gone wrong in Punjab? Sikhism was originally born to defend the mother-church, Hinduism. The tenth Sikh Guru Govind Singh, 'one of the most glorious heroes of our race,' as Vivekananda called him, transformed the meek Sikhs into courageous lions—Singhs. He did this, and even sacrificed his own father, four sons, friends, disciples and ultimately himself, in the cause of the defence of Hinduism. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru who collected the *Adi Granth* had to accept death from emperor Jehangir, for this labour.

The teachings of 'gentle' Guru Nanak, who founded the Sikh religion during the time of Babar, the first Moghul emperor of India, are both ritualistic and philosophical. Rituals he made for a spiritual strengthening of the masses. Philosophy he accepted as the base of Sikhism. The philosophy is purely Vedantic, while the rituals were meant for a courageous defence of India and its religion against foreign aggressors. 'He who has known his own Self', says Nanak, 'is the true knower'. 'See one in all', says Guru Arjan Dev. Who is a Guru? Says the *Adi Granth*: 'He is a Satguru in whose company our minds get happiness. The restlessness of mind vanishes and perfection is attained.'

Nearly a century before Swami Vivekananda said: 'Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race. It never was, and, mark my words, it never will be'. Any attempt to solve our problems by materialistic



means will mean, Vivekananda said, 'that the whole race will be extinct in three generations'. 'The path of least resistance', in India, the path to solve national problems, is spirituality. 'We have to get a hold on spirituality and keep to it', Vivekananda asserted. Politics, in its modern form, is, more or less, known to all of us. Its manoeuvres, tactics, and statements—all are directed towards one single goal: how to acquire and remain in power. Certainly there are in our country many statesmen and nationalists who, although in power, never belong to these categories and hence their words and actions always have a genuine appeal to the masses. But, by large, politics today is a scene where men rob, cheat and murder each other with a strange complacency, bringing out fully the 'animal' in man. How can mutual trust be secured by politics where the political leaders cannot trust their own right-hand colleagues? Aristotle thought of man as 'political animal'; Indians thought of man as child of immortality, or a biological body-mind complex inside which is eternally present the real Self of man, the Atman, the undying divinity. To manifest this inherent divinity is the function of religion.

The word religion again, unsettles us. It brings, at once, horrible memories of gun-wielding-zealots and blood-stained temples. It seems we have forgotten the eternal truths of the Upanishadic religion which is the foundation of all religions born in India.

While touring Punjab, Vivekananda once had a strange experience. On a particular spot, the visions of past sages opened out before his prophetic eyes. He clearly saw a vast congregation of the holy sages discussing and exploring to ascertain the real nature of man. Suddenly one young sage, inspired with a divine realization, stood up, and sang out in deep musical intonations: 'Oh listen! Children of immortality even those that dwell in higher spheres. I have known that great Being who is like the effulgent sun beyond the veils of darkness. Knowing him alone, one attains immortality. There is no other way. There is no other way out.' So long as religion means this prophet or that book, this temple, or that god, there is no way for the total integration of Punjab or of India as a whole. Religion is the manifestation of man's divine nature, his higher Self. Books, rituals, or temples, are only different ways in order to reach that goal. They are not an end in themselves.

India is always the holy land. It spontaneously rises up and kneels before-realized saints and sages. India taught the kings, as Tagore wrote, to come down from the throne, and sit on the ground in the dress of the beggar. Sivaji did that. Asoka did that and integrated the largest Indian nation ever known in history. This was his way of conquest, the path of dharma-vijaya. Today Kumbhamelas do not send invitations to anyone. Even then millions take holy dip on a single day. This is no ritual-madness. Calmly, with prayerful lips people belonging to all religions throng to these holy spots just to feel their own divinity, a nearness to God, a temporary lifting up to a higher life in the vibrating atmosphere sanctified by saints and devotees. National integration is created in such moments unobtrusively, silently. That is why Vivekananda said, 'National integration in India must be a gathering up of its scattered spiritual forces....Sects, therefore, as a matter of course, must exist here, but what need not exist is sectarian quarrel. Sects must be, but sectarianism must not be'.

Today if the Hindu Mathadhipatis and Sikh priests can walk hand-in-hand in the disturbed towns of Punjab and if they can meet in these places even for a single day in the name of God, and kindle the fire of holiness and mutual love by their prayers and devotions, millions will come, feel blessed and their hearers will get united. Then only suspicion and hatred will slowly cease. Peace will return. Throughout history whenever we tried to give a political solution to a religious problem, we miserably failed. We have to give a true religious solution to our problems. When religion degenerates into politics, it becomes the worst tool for human destruction. The thirty years' war in Germany between the catholics and protestants, and the recent Iran-Iraq conflict are examples of such cases. When politics takes the path of religion, at least in India, it succeeds triumphantly. When Gandhi walked in Dandi, India followed him. He brought the tremendous moral force of religion into politics. Today we see just the opposite, a show of brutal forces in the arena of religion. We have now to press the moral forces of religion, the courage of purity and love, and the catholicity of religious pluralism, into service in order to solve the Punjab problem. It is possible and practical. We have to do it. The earlier, the better.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND THE WORLD OF YOUTH:** By NABANIHARAN MUKHOPADHYAY. Published by Akhil Bharat Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal. P.O. Balaram Dharma Sopan, Khardah, 24 Parganas, West Bengal 743 121. 1985. Pp. 220. Rs. 20.

This book is a collection of some brilliant Editorials previously published in *Vivek Jivan*—a bilingual monthly organ of Akhil Bharat Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal. The object of the Mahamandal is to rejuvenate Indian youth by working among them and 'upon their minds', as suggested by Swami Vivekananda, by infusing in them a sense of patriotism, by introducing them to the quintessence of the rich cultural heritage of India, and by inspiring them to undertake social service in a dedicated manner.

The book is divided into four parts. Part I dilates upon the problems of the Indian youth; Part II takes up the remedial measures for solving them; Part III lays stress on character building, and Part IV delineates the role of 'true' education in resolving a number of social issues.

The youth of today is restive and sullen. He is told that he is 'small, incomplete and incapable of doing anything big'. But the fact is that he has an immense potentiality in him; he is 'the centre of all power in society at large', and can change the course of history. 'In youth lies the seed of all good and well-being, but it is latent. The primary task is to resuscitate this dormant seed so that it can germinate and sprout', says N. Mukhopadhyay.

The nation is passing through a critical phase. While the rupee is overvalued, character is being devalued. We seem to have gone directionless while navigating on the sea of life; 'Our polestar is shut off by a cloud, the pointer of the compass, having lost its magnetism, is rotating crazily... We know not which shore to touch. We have lost faith in ourselves, in our own cruising power.'

How to overcome this crisis of confidence, of values and of character? Obviously we need to build a new man—a complete being who is not a schizophrenic or a cynic, but one who while appreciating the achievements of his forefathers works incessantly in the present, and remains away from the hallucinatory world of make-believes and wishful thinking. 'So from the worship of the dead past, O man, we invite

you to the worship of the living present, from the regretful brooding over by-gones, we invite you to the activities of the present', said Swami Vivekananda.

A nation is built brick by brick, and not all at once. Sincerity, self-confidence, hard work, love of country and the spirit of self-sacrifice—these are the prerequisites for social reconstruction. Legislation may not help much, but right education can metamorphose the character of people. Swami Vivekananda was right when he said that we are not much more moral than animals. 'We are only held down by the whips of society. If society said today, "I will not punish you if you steal", we would just make a rush for each other's property. It is the policeman that makes us moral.'

Another problem with us is that we are too much bothered about the shortcomings of others. We ignore our own follies and frailties and indulge in character assassination. We want to purify others not ourselves. The fact remains that it is the subjective world that rules the objective. 'Change the subject and the object is bound to change', said Swamiji. 'Purify yourself and the world is bound to be purified.'

N. Mukhopadhyay deserves to be complemented for producing a book which is both rich in style and content. It guides and inspires the reader from first to last.

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**SRI JNANADEVA'S AMRITANUBHAVA (WITH CHANGDEVA PASASHTI):** ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY R.K. BHAGAWAT. Published by Samata Books, 10 Kamraj Bhavan, 573 Mount Road, Madras 600 006. 1985. Pp. 149. Rs. 35.

Jñānadeva, the great saint and poet, who lived in the 13th century A.D., is known throughout Maharashtra for his *Jñanesvari*, a book read by the *warkaris* (pilgrims to Pandharpur) all the year round. This is an elaborate commentary on Bhagavad-Gita, garbed in an exquisite poetic language. It also elucidates the philosophy of Advaita in a most charming way. *Amṛtānubhava* is, however, Jñānadeva's original work and is a narration of the ineffable experience of self-realization. It is a lucid

exposition of śivādvaita philosophy, first formulated by Gauḍapāda, the great grand-teacher of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. The cardinal beliefs of this philosophy are:

1. There exists nothing else, except non-dual pure consciousness (Śiva) which is immutable, indescribable, unborn and imperishable and is the Supreme Self.

2. The Supreme Ātman out of self-love becomes the Beloved, i.e. the active energy (Śakti).

3. The two together create on their own person the universe of diverse shapes and forms, both sentient and insentient, without affecting their unity.

4. An embodied soul is held in bondage by ignorance and imperfect knowledge. Illusion, like the son of a barren woman—non-existing and yet playing havoc—is the cause of human bondage.

5. In supreme knowledge, there does not exist the trinity—the knower, the knowledge and the object of knowledge.

6. In overcoming Illusion, the individual is greatly helped by the four levels of speech viz. *vaikhari*, *madhyama*, *paśyanti* and *para*.

7. Ultimately it is one's own worthy preceptor (Guru) who brings about one's liberation by destroying ignorance and the ego. There remains, then, no distinction between the preceptor and the disciple.

All these terse facts are beautifully explained by Jananesvara in *Amṛtānubhava*, a work of 807 *ovis*, with the help of similies and metaphors.

The similies are so rooted in Marathi language and culture that it is well nigh impossible to translate them into English. Sri R. K. Bhagwat has really done a wonderful service to all those who do not know Marathi—the Marathi of the 13th century A.D. at that. His translation is faithful and beautiful. The essence of the teachings of Jñānadeva has not been lost in this English book. On the contrary a reader is able to appreciate the poetic beauty of the original composition as well. Sri Bhagwat is an expert in the economy of words. The translation is interspersed with his notes to elucidate some difficult concepts. But these notes do not encumber the original work. They have only added to the comprehensibility of the sublime spiritual thought.

As regards the propriety of writing down his own higher experiences, Śrī Jñānadeva says 'What sermon can one offer to Self? And what is one going to lose by keeping quiet? Therefore,

my gross form of speech (*vaikhari*) has assumed silence even in regard to silence. This is like drawing a picture of a fish on the surface of water.' (x. 16-17).

The introduction by the translator is quite elaborate, covering the first 18 pages of the book. It expounds the philosophy briefly and also epitomizes the contents of each chapter. This enables the aspirants to grasp the essence of Jñānadeva's thought, whereafter, he can glide into the text easily.

The translation of *Amṛtānubhava* is followed by the translation of the 65 *ovis* of *Changdeva pasasthi*—a letter written by Jñānadeva to a contemporary ascetic. It also contains an equally important spiritual message.

The get up of the book is beautiful, and the printing is flawless.

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**HEAT AND SACRIFICE IN THE VEDAS:**  
By UMA MARINA VESCI. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U.A Bungalow Road, Jawaharnagar, Delhi 110 007. 1985. Pp. xvii + 339. Rs. 100.

Religion involves offerings made to the deities or to the one God, either in return for the blessings obtained or to ensure grace and assistance. Such offerings are generally raw in kind, albeit in elaborate ritual. In the Vedic cult, however, such offerings are cooked rather than left raw. Cooking of the offerings itself assumes the nature of a ritual. Ritual cooking is especially relevant for the portion reserved for offering to Gods. Burnt offering thus becomes highly symbolic. The heat necessary for ritual cooking has its philosophical, historical and hermeneutic overtones. These are discussed in the book under review.

The author, who was born in Rome and graduated in ancient history and archaeology has been in India since 1963, involving herself in studies on Hinduism, especially in the Vedic context. This book is an evidence of her sympathetic approach, deep insight and commendable erudition. She is impressed by the fact that cooking is essentially a transformation of energy, at the physical as well as psychological levels. And she has set out to discover the philosophical, theological and cosmological messages which lie hidden in cooking as a ritual.

She starts with the assumption that the rite is really and truly a language with its own internal message. She approaches sacrifice as having a structure with certain synthetic rules which are well defined and valid. The compulsive part of the ritual consists in the not-to-be-transgressed nature of these rules. The book is an attempt to bring out these ritualistic rules in bold relief, and to provide an insight into these 'strange facts', which are hardly understandable at first.

The author had sketched out the framework of this book in an article in *Bijoragen* (Amsterdam, 1978, 39, pp. 399-423), entitled 'The Role of Heat in Vedic Sacrifice and the Place of Pain in the Act of Creation'. Heat in that article was defined as the source of physical, spiritual and psychic energy becoming apparent. That article dealt with Heat in three sections: Heat as such, Its lack, and Its excess. The book is an elaboration of the first of these sections, the latter two being omitted here.

The book is a great help in understanding the real import of Vedic ritual which unfortunately has become neglected and treated as casuistry by a decadent priestcraft. The loss of ritual awareness is one of the central problems of our times. It is not sufficiently understood that the 'traditional man reconstructs the world in which he lives by means of rituals'. It is an error to think that the ritual appeals to our fancy, or even to our reason; it appeals primarily to our intuition.

The book is an eloquent plea to regard 'the ritual as a fundamental factor for the reconstruction of a world in which the human being can live in peace and fulfil his destiny' (p. xv). It is a welcome addition to the critical and insightful literature on the Vedic religion.

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Professor of Psychology, Callison College,  
University of the Pacific USA

JALALU'D-DIN RUMI AND HIS  
TASAWWUF: BY HARENDRACHANDRA PAUL.  
Published by Shobharani Paul, M.I.G. Housing  
Estate, 60/67 B.T. Road, Block C/2, Calcutta  
700 002. 1985. Pp. xii + 455. Rs. 120.

In a multi-religious country like India, mysticism and comparative studies on religion

are a vital social necessity, not to speak of its importance to scholars and thinkers. The learned author of the book under review has correctly referred to mysticism as 'deification of man', 'a merging of the individual with the universal will', 'an intuitive certainty of contact with the supersensual world'. *Tasawwuf* or Sufism is understood as Islamic mysticism. Jalāluddīn Rūmī is admittedly one of the greatest and most respected Sufi who lived in Iran during A.D. 1207-73. His thoughts on mysticism are spelt out in his writings which comprise 25,000 rhyming couplets in *Mathnavī* and 1,600 *rubāyāt* or quatrains.

Dr. Harendrachandra Paul's book is a learned, fully documented discourse on Rūmī's life and philosophy and its impact on contemporary Islamic mystics. He has referred to the works on the same subject by Arberry and Nicholson and also to Upanisads, Gīta, Quran and Hadith in explaining the thoughts of this poet-philosopher. For Rūmī, the essence of religion is a cosmic feeling, an intuition of oneness with the spirit of the universe, almost like the Indian conception of the unity of Atman and Brahman. Like Bergson, Rūmī affirmed that intuition is a higher kind of intellect. Dr. Paul has examined the universal and spiritual aspects of each religion. Like all great mystics, Rūmī laid stress on the fact that the formalities of each religion may differ but the nature and context of the inner spirit shining in the heart of a devotee of every faith is the same.

Unlike some of the modern interpreters, Dr. Paul has rightly stated that Rūmī has claimed his philosophy in *Mathnavī* as an exposition of the mystical import of the *Quran*. Rūmī's mysticism is based on the doctrine of *tauhid* (Unity of God), which is a fundamental teaching of Islam. But, as a mystic, he emphasized the importance of Love in the universe and in personal realization of God. The author has stated in the words of Rūmī, 'His love is manifest and the Beloved is hidden; the friend is outside, and His splendour is the world'. To Rūmī the state of pure love can only be realized. His pantheistic view of the universe also follows from his selfless concept of Divine love. He said, 'The created beings are, as if, so many waves which rise from the ocean (God), and are again mixed with the ocean. The waves have no origin in themselves; they come from the ocean, they stand on the ocean, and are again mixed with it.'

The book, though illuminating in itself as a dependable exposition of Rūmī's Sufism, would have been more helpful if the distinguishing features of Rūmī's thoughts had been compared with those of other Sufi schools such as Quaderia, Chistia, Suhrawardy, Naqshbandi etc. A subject-index would have been appreciated by scholars. English translations of the poems quoted by the author in this book would have enhanced the usefulness of the book. The book, however, is a comprehensive work on Rūmī's philosophy and is an asset to scholars, religious people and lovers of literature.

SYED S.A. MASUD M.A. LL. B.  
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#### MALAYALAM

**SAHITYASANCHARAM:** By SWAMI SIDDHINATHANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Sevashrama, Kallai, Calicut, Kerala, 673 018. 1986. Pp. xii + 355. Rs. 20.

This fascinating book consists of 28 essays on different topics of religious, spiritual, literary and educational importance. Apart from the importance of the topics dealt with, the most notable feature of the present book is their variety. To press maximum amount of thought into minimum of words is a great art. This is exactly what the author has done in this book in which the reader will find the wealth of wisdom of many minds placed on a platter, as it were.

It may be mentioned that the author is a widely travelled pilgrim who has published several books on his pilgrimages. The present book, as its title indicates, is the outcome not of his physical travels, but of his inner travels in the world of thoughts. About this change in his literary effort he says: 'The days of frantic hurry are over. What else can one be except a *kutichaka* (a mendicant confined mostly to his hermitage)? But will the deep-rooted tendency vanish overnight? Moreover, the mind's inherent nature is to wander ceaselessly. Therefore, the journey hereafter will be within the realm of the

mind only. And this book is the tangible effect of these occasional mental flights'. (P. ix).

Every article in this book conveys something new and fresh. The author, apart from being the repository of vast erudition, is endowed with the gift of intuitive thinking and his mature wisdom touches brilliance when he says: 'The old see the front and the back, but the glance of the young is cast upon the front only, the back being totally ignored'. (P. 15). 'The path of action finds its culmination in the path of knowledge and this thought has been the mother of all virtues insofar as they relate to Bharat' (P. 18).

While the Greek root *muo* has been traced as the basis of 'mystery' and interpreted as an equivalent term for the Sanskrit root *man* (to think) (p. 62), an attempt has been made to show *sahitya* as the *sahitabhava* (the state of inseparability) through a skilful interpretation of the famous mantra in the *Mundaka Upanishad* describing 'Two birds of beautiful plumage' (p. 349). Here the boldness of speculation of the author is quite obvious for the imagination of ordinary literateurs seldom turns towards spiritual heights. Here could be seen again glimpses of the unity of all religions when the author without any reservation goes to describe at length the perfection of Lord Buddha (p. 25), the Divinity of Lord Christ (p. 48), the spiritual perception of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Ramana Maharshi (pp. 65-72), the loftiness of the thought of Aquinas (p. 184), the vision of Guru Nanak (p. 208) and the social impact of the teachings of Sri Narayana Guru (p. 262). Swami Siddhinathananda can well claim the honour of being a true representative of the great religious movement set in motion by Sri Ramakrishna with its ideals as broad as the sky, as vast as the ocean.

All told, this book is a good example of how literary talents can be harnessed for the promotion of spirituality and how creative writing could be lifted to higher levels and made spiritually rewarding.

V. PANOLI  
Trichur, Kerala



## NEWS AND REPORTS

### REPORT OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION BELUR MATH, FOR 1985-86

*Issued by the General Secretary  
Ramakrishna Mission, on 28 December 1986*

The 77th Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at the Belur Math premises on Sunday the 28th December 1986, at 3.30 p.m. Swami Gambhirananda, President of the Ramakrishna Mission was the Chairman of the proceedings. A synopsis of the Governing Body's report for 1985-86, placed before the meeting, is given below.

In the period under report, the Mission spent a sum of Rs. 14,00,765/- under the head 'Relief and Rehabilitation' towards providing succour to the hapless victims of various calamities like flood, cyclone etc. Apart from this, relief articles worth Rs. 11,08,052/- were received as gift from philanthropic minded public and distributed amongst the distressed and needy.

The Ramakrishna Math also conducted relief programmes, involving an expenditure of Rs. 3,60,486.

During the year Pallimangal programmes (Integrated Rural Development) involving Agro-economic service, cottage industry, pisciculture, health and hygiene, education work, etc. were implemented by quite a few branches of both the Mission and the Math involving substantial outlay of funds. The Headquarters alone spent Rs. 7,74,943/- under these programmes.

Amidst the important developments during the year, the inauguration of 'Ramakrishna Darshan' a museum on the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna and 'Samaj Sevak Sikshana-mandira' an institution for training youths in rural development work, at Saradapith, Belur, deserve special mention. The centre at Raipur has undertaken tribal welfare work on a massive scale in the Abujmahar area of Bastar District, Madhya Pradesh. The project envisages providing facilities of free education, medical treatment, vocational training etc.

A branch of the Mission was started at Agartala. Mobile medical services were

commenced by our Itanagar and Rajahmundry centres.

The academic results of the educational institutions were brilliant as usual with our students securing the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, 10th, 11th, 13th, 15th, 16th, and 20th positions in the Madhyamik Examination 1985 and the 3rd, 4th, 9th, and 13th positions in the Higher Secondary Examination 1985, in West Bengal.

Significant developments during the same period in the Ramakrishna Math were the consecration of a marble image of Sri Ramakrishna at Contai and the inauguration of a 5,000 litre solar water system at Rajkot.

The Mission did commendable medical work through its 8 hospitals, 66 dispensaries and 15 mobile units. Rural people and tribal folk were the major beneficiaries of 32 dispensaries and all the mobile units. In all 42,87,388 patients were rendered medical service.

The Math served 7,41,121 patients through its 5 hospitals, 17 dispensaries and 4 mobile units. Out of these, 3 hospitals, 8 dispensaries and 3 mobile units were located in rural and tribal areas which were much lacking in basic medical facilities.

In 1985-86 the Ramakrishna Mission and Ramakrishna Math lived up to their reputation in the field of education. The trend of ever-increasing demand for admission was clearly evident. The educational institutions of the Mission numbering 966 had on their rolls 1,18,999 students while the Ramakrishna Math had a students' strength of 9,676 in its 92 educational institutions. Out of these, 863 institutions, including 428 non-formal education centres, were located in rural and tribal areas.

National Youth Day was celebrated by most of our centres, in an enthusiastic and solemn manner. The celebrations culminated in a grand youth convention held at Belur Math in which there were about 11,000 participants.

The Math and Mission centres in other countries were engaged in educational, medical, cultural and spiritual activities of various types.

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur, at the end of the year the Mission and Math had 75 and 70 branches respectively, in India and a few other countries.

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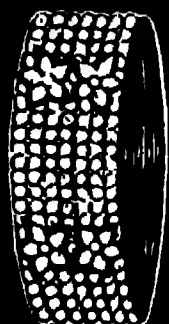
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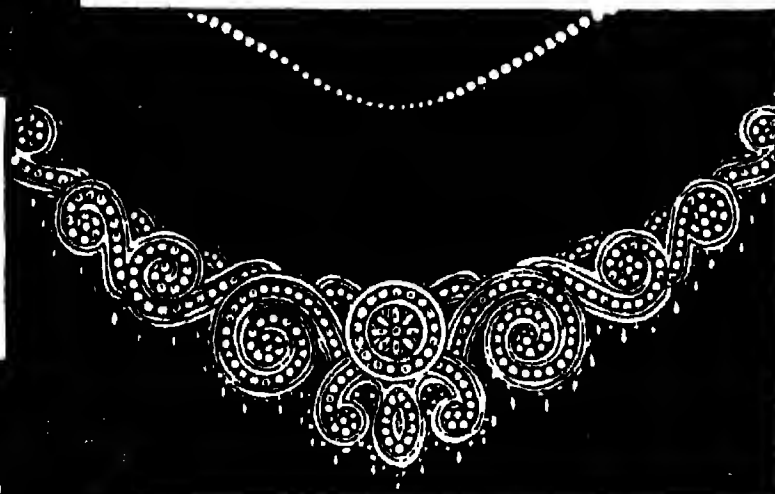
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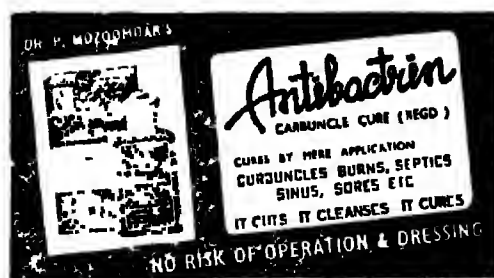
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This Self cannot be known through much study, nor through the intellect, nor through much hearing. It can be known through the Self alone that the aspirant prays to ; this Self reveals Its true nature to the seeker.

The Self that is subtler than the subtle and greater than the great is lodged in the heart of (every) creature. A desireless man sees that glory of the Self through the serenity of the organs, and (thereby he becomes) free from sorrow.

Arise, awake, and learn by approaching the excellent ones. The wise ones describe that path to be as inaccessible as a razor's edge, which when sharpened, is difficult to tread on.

The self-existent Lord destroyed man by his outgoing senses. Therefore one sees the outer things and not the inner Self. The (rare) discriminating man, desiring for immortality, turns his eyes inward and then sees the indwelling Self.

*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*

(1.2.2, 1.2.23, 1.2.20, 1.3.14, 2.1.1)

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is based on a trip made by the Joint Editor of this journal to the places associated with Swami Vivekananda's visit to Almora, and its adjoining areas.

In SRI RAMAKRISHNA : THE ESTABLISHER OF DHARMA Swami Satyarupananda of the Ramakrishna Mission, Samaj Sevak Sikshamandira, Belur Math, dwells on *dharmaglāni* and how Sri Ramakrishna established Dharma in modern times.

Dr. M. Lakshmikumari, President of the Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, and an ardent Vivekanandist, discusses in SCIENCE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT how Vedanta philosophy as interpreted by Vivekananda, is the most rational way to develop our higher potentialities and innate perfection.

A PILGRIMAGE TO MT. LOWE by Brahma-charini Bhavani of Vedanta Society, Hollywood, is a short note based on a trip made by the devotees and monks of the Hollywood Centre to this mountain.

## ALMORA : ALONG THE FOOTPRINTS OF THE HIMALAYAN MONK

(EDITORIAL)

On a sunny winter morning of late December we were climbing up the same mountains of Almora that the wandering monk Vivekananda had climbed 94 years before, in 1890. Mad after a great realization, he came, like a 'God intoxicated beggar of the East,'<sup>1</sup> in these caves of Kasar Devi, a Mother's temple on the top of the highest mountain range of Almora. In the golden sunlight peeping through the branches of magnificent pines and crowding Rhododendrons we were walking on the same footprints of the Himalayan monk, Vivekananda.

It was in 1890. Since last one year the caged lion was struggling to unloose his fetters. His biggest bondage was the host of silent faces, the literally starving and the half-naked children of his master. They now gathered round him, in whom they

felt the new presence of their departed teacher. On the other hand, the 'great mission' of his master was tormenting his mind. He could not see the mission in all its clarity. Yet he was vaguely aware of its vast immensity. And with this awareness came an acute realization of the paucity of his own power. To fulfil such a mission one required a colossal accumulation of spiritual energy. And this could be achieved only by a life of intense renunciation and austerities. Torn in this dichotomy he wrote, 'I am longing for a flight to the Himalayas'.<sup>2</sup> The few visits to Pavhari Baba finally left him disappointed. He must do it all himself. There was none to share his visions. 'I have my plans for the future and they shall be a secret',<sup>3</sup> he said. Only one ideal stood before him—Śuka.

1. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1972) Vol. 1, p. 33.

2. Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979) Vol. 1, p. 241.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

A few months earlier he wrote, 'Alas for the irony of fate that in this land of Bhagavan Shuka's birth, renunciation is looked down upon as madness and sin'. He must go to the Himalayas and reach Suka's transcendence. A couple of months before, while at Rishikesh he was determined to visit Kedarnath and Badrinath. But his first disciple Sadananda's health failed. In desperation Vivekananda left him, and started walking on his way to the upper Himalayas. But soon he returned. He had to.

The monk in him now spoke out to the disciple : 'You have really become like a chain round my feet. I had gone a long way, but then I remembered that you were alone here and were such a fool. I could not be sure what you might do. Look, it was for you I had to return'.<sup>4</sup>

Desperate struggle succeeded. Vivekananda finally decided to set out for the Himalayas. He allowed only one to accompany him, his adventurous brother disciple, Akhandananda. 'You are my man. You have faith! Come, let's be off together',<sup>5</sup> he said. Before starting, the intrepid heart, however strong, trembled! Who knows when the success would come! Is failure an impossibility? For a final blessing he rushed to Holy Mother, in whom he found the power of Ramakrishna, and of Ramakrishna's Divine Mother. 'Mother', he said, 'I shall not return until I have attained the highest Jnana.' Mother blessed him in the name of the Master. When she asked him to see his own mother before this great departure, the dedicated one answered : 'Mother, you alone are my Mother'. He hardly knew what cosmic power would now be protecting and guiding him in a thousand ways. In the height of his spirit, to his brother disciples he held up his great dream, 'I shall not return until

I acquire such realization that my very touch will transform a man'.<sup>6</sup>

Within a few days he set out for Almora along with Akhandananda. An intense desire for total renunciation consumed him. He had now nothing with him except a walking stick, a piece of cloth, a rag and two small books, the Gita and the Imitation of Christ, his unfailing companions for these days. He dispossessed himself of everything except a burning desire for God's grace. The guiding principle during these days, as he said afterwards, was the favourite incantation of Buddha, 'Even as the lion not trembling at noises, even as the wind not caught in a net, even as the lotus-leaf untouched by water, so do thou wander alone, like the rhinoceros' His constant refrain were the lines from the Imitation of Christ, 'Silence, all ye teachers! And silence, ye prophets! Speak Thou alone O Lord, unto my soul'.<sup>7</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

From the moment he started walking from Kathgodam towards Almora, the Himalayan sublimity slowly began to engulf him. His naturally meditative mind began to see new horizons. The first great spiritual experience came at a quiet confluence of two hilly rivers, some twenty miles below Almora. It was at a quiet riverside village, Kankrighat.

On a winter afternoon we reached this village, Kankrighat. With difficulty we crossed on foot the hilly river Kosi. Some of us had even lost balance on the mossy stones and slipped into the knee-deep ice-cold water flowing down with a frightening speed. Finally, we reached the hallowed place. It was a tiny spot, a bowl-like triangle covered on three sides by high mountains. The river Kosi, meets the river Shrota (or Sirota) after creating a small

4. Ibid., p. 224.

5. Ibid., p. 241.

6. Ibid., pp. 241-42.

7. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 58.

island in the confluence, where a huge peepal tree with outspreading roots and branches stood like a giant shelter. Below the tree was an old Siva temple. In front of the temple stretched the small river bed. It is a confluence with innumerable, huge boulders scattered up to the end of the river horizon. On all the three sides stood the steep and dark mountains. It was all so quiet except for the murmuring sound of the rivers, the only sound in the whole panorama.

Here under this peepal tree the first enlightenment came when the monk got buried in a deep meditation. The moment was ripe with infinite potentiality. It saw the birth of a new outlook, a new philosophy which was to be the foundation stone of the monk's global movement. All these years of renunciation he only struggled to realize this truth, to understand the true nature of the Cosmic Reality, the Brahman, that the scriptures had taught him. The way was meditation, the long inward journey, at the end of which the restless seeker reached the great illumination. It all came here. He realized the Truth for which he had left behind everything, and practised intense austerities. The Ultimate, all-pervading Reality was imbedded in the core of every little atom of this universe. The macrocosm was indeed there inside the heart of the microcosm. The phenomenal world is nothing but the noumenon, the One Reality. The knot in his heart got opened. A long-drawn inner conflict got resolved. Intense renunciation brought him the vision of God in all things and brought forth in later years the celebrated philosophy of Vivekananda—God in everything.

Thenceforward only God remained; the world disappeared altogether. To his brother disciple Akhandananda (his premonastic name, Gangadhar) he said in the fullness of this great spiritual breakthrough, 'Oh, Gangadhar! I have just passed

through one of the greatest moments of my life. Here under the peepal tree one of the greatest problems of my life has been solved. I have found the oneness of the macrocosm with microcosm. In this microcosm of the body everything that is there (in the macrocosm) exists. I have seen the whole universe within an atom'. We remember the realization of the ancient ṛṣis—*aṇoraṇīyan mahato mahīyan*—the ultimate Reality is smaller than the small and greater than the great. (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.2.20). In the exuberance of the mystic vision he wrote in his notebook, 'The microcosm and macrocosm are built on the same plan. Just as the individual soul is encased in the living body, so is the Universal Soul in the Living Prakriti (Nature)—the objective universe. Shivā (ie. Kali) embracing Shiva: this is not a fancy .... This dual aspect of the Universal Soul is eternal. So what we perceive or feel is this combination of the Eternally formed and the Eternally formless.'<sup>8</sup>

This realization at Kankrighat was the foundation of the new Vedanta of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. The orthodox Hinduism regarded the One as the Real, and the many as unreal. But Vivekananda added, 'And what Ramakrishna Paramahansa and I have added to this is, that the Many and the One are the same Reality, perceived by the same mind at different times and in different attitudes.'<sup>9</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

'Get up musafir. Bundle your things. You have still to go a long way.' The wandering monk along with his companion stood up for the next movement.

From Kankrighat began the final part of their journey to Almora. The taste of the first great realization now filled him with

<sup>8</sup> *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 250.

<sup>9</sup> *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 29.

an intensified impulse of renunciation. It was now, as his disciples heard from him afterwards, 'a passionate longing to lose one's identity, to be united with the lowliest and most hidden things, to go forth from amongst men, and be no more remembered by them.'<sup>10</sup> He was now under the vow to ask for nothing and even fast unto death if no food was voluntarily offered to him. The 'longest time he had ever gone without food, under this austerity, was five days',<sup>11</sup> as he revealed afterwards. Only a robust athlete like Vivekananda could stand such incredible austerities. It was superhuman.

But the body revolted despite all the strength of the spirit. On the outskirts of Almora Vivekananda fainted in hunger and weariness. It was in a muslim graveyard. The helpless companion Akhandananda rushed in search of water in the stony hillside. Meanwhile came forward a fakir, the custodian of the cemetery, and seeing the monk's plight, offered him a cucumber. Too tired, even to eat it, the monk now asked the fakir to put it in his mouth. With due reverence the fakir held back, saying that he was a mussalman. Softly came the reply, 'What does that matter? Are we not all brothers?'

The wandering monk could never forget this life-saver, the muslim fakir. Seven years after, when the world-famous Vivekananda returned to Almora, he spied out, unmistakably, the face of the fakir from among the crowd in the procession organized in his honour. With gratitude Vivekananda stopped, called him near and gave him some reward. To the assembled crowd he introduced the fakir, 'This man really saved my life. Never had I felt so exhausted.'

In the golden sunlight of the morning we stood on the stone where Vivekananda fainted nearly a century ago. Two great Almora devotees of Vivekananda, had built

up a small memorial rest-house there for visitors to stop and remember Swamiji even for a while. The deserted stone cottage of the fakir with its broken roofs still stood there. Jungle creepers had covered it. Our heart filled with gratitude for the fakir who once saved the unknown prophet.

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We climbed down from the main road and reached a small temple of Divine Mother, Patal Bhairavi. Our guide reminded us that here nearly a century ago Lala Badri Shah, one of the richest men in Almora and a retired Army Captain used to visit this temple every morning. It was his daily habit, as his relatives told us, to see a sadhu first and then take food. Here one blessed morning Shahji met two disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Shivananda and Sri Vaikuntha Nath Sanyal. He had already known Swami Akhandanandaji, another disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. It is this Swami, the 'Bengali Gangadhar' or the 'Babaji, who returned from Tibet', who first announced to Badri Shah about the proposed visit of Swamiji to Almora. From Badrinath he wrote to Shahji: 'A Gurubhai of mine is proceeding to Almora .... He is one of my advanced Gurubhais, a highly educated gentleman leading a perfect ascetic life since ten or twelve years. He has sacrificed all his worldly prosperities for the sake of Almighty. Now he is in the stage of Paramahansa<sup>12</sup> ....'

Badri Shah who was already a benevolent host to the disciples of Ramakrishna, now felt blessed to receive the Paramahansa, who arrived finally at Almora.

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In the glittering sunlight of a winter morning we stood in awe and silence, in the unspeakable beauty of Kasar Devi. A lover of sublimity he had chosen these

10. Ibid., p. 55.

11. Ibid., p. 60.

12. *Swami Vivekananda's Three Visits to Almora* (Almora: The Ramakrishna Kutir) p.3.

remote caves of Kasar Devi as the place of his meditation. 'The saints live on mountain tops', he used to say, 'to enjoy the scenery'.<sup>13</sup> Even after nearly a century, this place remains as the sublimest part of Almora. The spot is indeed chosen for gods. Standing far above the valley of men, and the undulating surface of the sea of clouds beneath, this holy mountain top is even now protected by tall pine trees guarding the holy spot like silent sentinels. Through their branches one can have the closest view of the snow white body of Trishul and Nandadevi.

It is indeed the spot from where mother nature, Prakriti, could feel her nearness to the Purusha—the all-white Shiva. One can feel, even by a casual visit, that it is a secluded and sacred spot from where one feels nearness and even oneness with the Shiva within—the Self, the Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute.

The unspeakable sublimity and the calmness of the place make one wonder that Vivekananda could ever leave this place. But he had to. It happened one day when he got down to the town and went to his friend Lala Badri Shah. Destiny was waiting for him with the rudest shock to his naturally loving heart—a telegram with the news of his sister's suicide in extremely pitiful circumstances. And the wire was soon followed by a letter which told, in all its horrid details, of the inevitable step which his helpless widow sister was forced to take.<sup>14</sup> At once the dream of a meditative life in the Himalayas was shattered to pieces. Restless and disconsolate, he retreated into the caves of Kasar Devi, far away from the last sign of human habitation. But peace was gone. And the unquenching fire of agony for his beloved sister, one day

drove him out, as it were, from these solitary caves. He realized that his mission was waiting for him on the burning plains of India, and not in the luxury of lonely living amidst these caves. 'Nothing in my whole life ever so filled me with the sense of work to be done. It was as if I were thrown out from that life of solitude, to wander to and from in the plains below', he said. Vivekananda left Almora with a burning passion in his heart—a passion to lift Hindu women, especially the widows, to the glory of a new life of total independence—social, intellectual and spiritual.

That was the beginning of his prophetic dedication to the cause of 'the women and the masses'. These became henceforward the two missions nearest to his heart. In the West once when he felt himself dying, he called his disciple Nivedita and confided to her, 'Never forget! The word is, *Women and the People*'.<sup>15</sup>

This was a boon and benediction for India and humanity as a whole. Nothing but this terrible thunderbolt could make him move out of this most lovable spot of sublimity. Shiva returned to drink the death-dealing poison of human suffering. But did he not look all the more beautiful now? To this Nilakantha Shiva, whose throat turned blue with poisons of existential suffering of humanity, Indians pray in their supplications, 'Oh Shiva! Thou indeed look all the more beautiful, despite your deformity. For, therein lies the refuge for all beings—the refuge of fearlessness.'

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But wanderlust is a sort of divine madness. It hardly gets satisfied. With his brother disciples Vivekananda now started walking right from Almora to Badri. At Karnaprayag the journey had to be abandoned because of famine in the region. In Rishikesh, at the foothills of the Himalayas

13. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 32.

14. *Swami Vivekananda's Three Visits to Almora*, op. cit., p. 8.

15. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 192.



he again plunged into severe asceticism and spiritual practice. Suddenly he fell sick to the point of death. When the brother disciples began to cry in despair a strange monk came, as if from nowhere, and saved his life. Vivekananda opened his eyes, and said, 'Cheer up my boys. I shall not die.' Once again in this apparently unconscious state he saw that he had a mission in the world to fulfil, and that he could not leave his body before the mission was fulfilled.<sup>16</sup>

Little recovered, Vivekananda now moved again. But his brother disciples, too, now followed him like famished gulls round the only ship in the ocean. Finally at Meerut he got determined to be freed from this last holy bondage. To the brother disciples he now clearly told : 'It is not possible to perform any spiritual disciplines, unless the Maya (bondage) of the brother disciples is given up. Whenever I plan to practise disciplines, the Master puts some obstacle on my way. Now I shall go alone. I shall not tell anyone where I am staying.'<sup>17</sup> One morning in the late January of 1891 Vivekananda left them, and started walking alone with God.

The wandering friar now got engulfed in the vast ocean of Indian humanity. His days now alternated between the kings' palaces and pariahs' huts, between pundits' houses and philosophers' chambers, between orthodox Hindu householders and Mohammedan hosts. None failed to notice an unmistakable divinity and a prophetic power enveloping him. But neither discussions nor devotions could satisfy his longings. From Delhi to Rajputana, from Madras to Kanyakumari, from Bombay to Mysore, he moved in order to find ways to fulfil his master's mission. Sri Ramakrishna once said : 'Naren will teach the world.' But whom to teach ? Centuries of ignorance

and poverty and upper class exploitation had driven the millions of Indian masses to become only next-door neighbour to brutes. Did not his master teach him 'There is no religion for empty stomachs ?'

The suffering of teeming millions gradually loomed larger and larger in all its horrid dimensions. There was no hope from the so-called educated and the upper classes. He felt himself responsible. With this rude realization came a strange change in him. Without his knowing it, the desire for personal salvation got slowly drowned under an overwhelming desire to save the suffering millions of India. The asceticism of Suka and the intellectual brilliance of Shankara now gave way to the bleeding passion of a Christ and Buddha. Finally, he decided to go to the West, in order to help his countrymen.

At Mt. Abu Road, at this moment, two of his brother disciples suddenly spied him. They saw in him a transfigured presence, a radiant figure. They begged him to return to the monastery at the height of this divine radiance. Vivekananda literally cried out, 'I cannot understand your so-called religion! But my heart has grown much, much larger, and I have learnt to feel (the sufferings of others). Believe me, I feel it very sadly !'<sup>18</sup> His voice was choked with emotion, and tears began to roll down his cheeks. Instantly he tore himself away from the brother disciples. He was gone. He lost himself again in the vast sea of suffering humanity.

A brother disciple Swami Turiyananda who heard these words, said : 'I could clearly see that the whole suffering of humanity had penetrated his palpitating heart.' They heard in his voice the compassionate cry of the Avalokiteswara, the Buddha who turns in all directions in order to respond to human suffering. They found

16. *Life of Swami Vivekananda*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 257.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

18. Romain Rolland, *Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama) p. 31.

in their master's life a repetition of the 'tale of Bodhisattva who had held himself back from Nirvana till the last grain of dust in the universe should have gone in before him to salvation'.<sup>19</sup> The wandering friar did not know that in his begging bowl destiny had already dropped the priceless jewel, the radiance of a prophet's divinity, which he was still seeking in silence and solitude. His disciples understood later on that 'there may in a great life be elements which, he who lives it may not himself understand.'<sup>20</sup>

In early May of 1898, Vivekananda returned, after his western conquest, to his beloved Almora. It was now a return of the prophet of the masses and moribund Hinduism. Along with his dear English disciple, Goodwin and hundreds of admirers he entered Almora and found, 'it was roses, roses all the way'. Just before entering Almora, Vivekananda was made to mount a gaily decorated horse and a huge procession followed him. Three thousand people gathered in the bazaar in front of Badri Shah's house. All along the way women stood on the roof-tops and showered him with flowers and auspicious rice. A big pandal was set up and houses were lit with candles. The slumbering Almora suddenly woke up to receive its beloved monk, now a world-teacher, a *jagad-guru*.

It was in the house of Badri Shah that he was now received again and there he stayed for nearly two months and a half. The housemaster showed us the room where he stayed. It was a beautiful room with low doors, in the hill fashion, and heavily carved with designs on wood. Right outside the room was the main bazaar road. Sitting there on a wooden chair, Swamiji used to meet people and speak to the

assembled listeners. It is there that he gave his celebrated Almora-speech. Two addresses, one in English and the other in Sanskrit were read out in this reception. Vivekananda made a short speech. Almora heard only the voice of the old wandering monk.

This is the land of dreams of our forefathers, in which was born Parvati, the Mother of India. This is the holy land where every ardent soul in India wants to come at the end of its life, and to close the last chapter of its mortal career.

As peak after peak of this Father of Mountains began to appear before my sight, all the propensities to work, seemed to quiet down, and instead of talking about what had been done and what was going to be done, the mind reverted to that one eternal theme which the Himalayas always teach us —renunciation.<sup>21</sup>

To the request made by the Almora people 'to start a centre in the Himalayas', in the tradition of Acharya Shankara, Vivekananda replied, 'this is the spot which I want to select as one of the great centres to teach this universal religion.' This dream was realized within two years in a remote corner of Almora, and this centre was known as the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati.

In spite of all these ovations, Vivekananda would find little peace. He now felt that even Almora was not quiet enough. Twice he retreated to Dewaldhar, an estate some twenty miles to north. There he rode on horseback like a child, in the midst of the lonely Himalayan valley. His health recouped, he now decided to return to plains for his work. Before he left he gave a lecture at the English club, at their invitation, on the Eastern and Western approach to soul. At the Almora Inter College, he gave two more lectures, in response to the public request. Here he gave

19. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 34.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964) Vol. 3, pp. 352-54.

his first lecture in Hindi, the subject being 'Vedic Teaching in Theory and Practice'.

In 1898 Vivekananda returned again to Almora. This time he came for rest. The last few years of incessant struggle both in the West and in India, left him physically shattered. His mission was not yet over. There were miles to go before he desired sleep. The tired athlete needed a few days of quiet breathing. Vivekananda came this time along with his two other brother-disciples, Swamis Turiyananda and Niranjanananda, and two of his own disciples, Swamis Sadananda and Swarupananda. On the way to Almora, at Nainital, people spread flowers and palm tree leaves on the road. It was an Oriental custom, as his western disciples felt, in which they received Jesus at Jerusalem, after his divine ordination. Along with all these monks Swamiji stayed in a large house rented by Capt. and Mrs. Sevier. These two English disciples of the Swami had already come earlier to Almora in order to start the Himalayan centre for their master in the house known as 'Thompson House'. Here in this house, on 11 June 1898, Vivekananda started once again his beloved journal *Prahuddha Bharata* or 'Awakened India', under the editorship of Swami Swarupananda. It was originally started two years before in Madras, but with the sudden death of its brilliant editor Rajam Ayer it suddenly stopped publication. Swamiji decided to make its home now in the Himalayas. The other western friends and disciples, Sister Nivedita, Mrs. Ole Bull and Josephine MacLeod lived now at 'Oakley House', another bungalow not very far from the 'Thompson House'. Today 'Thompson House' stands almost exactly in the same shape, and is used for a different purpose. The 'Oakley House' still belongs to the relatives of Badri Shah's family. Standing on these once-hallowed houses, people still hope that some day they will

shine as monuments in the name of Vivekananda.

Here every morning on the 'rose covered verandah' of 'Oakley House' he used to have his breakfast and converse with his western disciples. The magnificent deodars (the tree of the gods) stood all around with their odour of black-berry fragrance, and added to the 'unutterable depth' of the environment. And above all there was 'the great white range like a presence that cannot be set aside.'<sup>22</sup>

In this Himalayan sublimity Vivekananda was at the height of his thoughts. Only great figures and sweeping movements in Indian history passed through his mind. It was at Almora that he got a letter with the news of self-immolation and death of his ascetic, Pavhari Baba. With a sense of great loss, Swamiji read out the letter to all, and said 'Pavhari Baba has completed all his sacrifices with the sacrifice of his own body. He has burnt himself in the sacrificial fire.'<sup>23</sup>

With a deep reverence he spoke of Vidyasagar's astounding sense of dignity and self-respect. Defying all English traditions he went, when invited, to meet the Viceroy, in his typical half-naked pundit's dress of a dhoti, a chaddar and a simple slipper. He spoke again, of the nun who was asked how long the carnal desires invade the sadhaka. She only sent out a dish of ashes to the inquirer outside, who now realized that these desires will exist in some form or other so long as the body is not consigned to flames.

In the Himalayan solitude, the mood of renunciation and self-imposed solitude reared its head again. Vivekananda soon left alone for Shya Devi, a forested peak

22. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, Ed. by Sankari Prasad Basu (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1982) Vol. 1, p. 11.

23. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 300.

some miles west of Almora. For three days he stayed there. When he returned he felt happy that he was still the 'old-time sannyasin, able to go barefoot and endure heat or cold and scanty fare, unspoiled by the West'. The sannyasin returned from this retreat only to receive another painful news of his life. A wire brought the news that Goodwin, his faithful and child-like disciple, had died at Ootacamund. For a few days Vivekananda was stunned with an unspeakable grief. Then one day he came out, and as he looked at the distant snow peaks he quietly uttered : 'The days of my public utterance are over.' That night he composed a poem *REQUIESCAT IN PACE* and sent it to Goodwin's mother in London. Vivekananda seldom spoke in public thereafter.

Of all the blessed souls who followed Swamiji this time at Almora it is Nivedita who reaped the golden harvest of this Himalayan summer. Vivekananda had already accepted her as his daughter. There he spoke in London to her of the great purity and sacrifice of Holy Mother Sarada Devi. And then, in a dream-like mood of mystic calmness Vivekananda told her, 'Yes, yes ! these things have been, and they will again be. Go in peace, my daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole.'<sup>24</sup> At Almora the fire of Swamiji's spiritual moods flickered again. In the sight of the mountains he was never tired of speaking of Shiva.<sup>25</sup> And they were meant for her. She must come out of the bondages, from the 'inevitable suffering that comes of the different national habits of the body and mind'<sup>26</sup> Untrained to this kind of thinking her old thoughts revolted. Her English patriotism now came to the surface. The

'scepticism of mine'<sup>27</sup> as she said, refused to accept all the words of her master. The desire for external dynamism now stood face to face with the need of a complete and ascetic renunciation of all selfish motives, and the subtlest remnants of the 'determinedly insular' ideals that she had been obstinately clinging to. It was time to learn the 'Indian point of view' if she indeed wished to be dedicated to India. The need now was a purgatorial journey of self-denial, solitude, and constant striving for self-purification. 'Patriotism like yours is a sin', Swamiji scolded her. 'The old cat must die', Vivekananda used to say. Nivedita realized the pains of this frightening journey. It must be a death of the old self and then, a complete rebirth into an altogether new life of total renunciation. Inner conflict expressed now as outer restlessness. For days, her mind was in an upheaval, 'the inner strife grew high.'<sup>28</sup> The boat was now in the choppy sea. Then one morning in a mood of desperate restlessness she stood under the huge deodar tree of the Oakley House. She was now in a frightening void. It was darkness outside and chaos inside. One of the older ladies of the party approached Vivekananda in order to put an end to this unbearable conflict which 'might easily go too far'.

In the evening Vivekananda returned. He felt he himself must go out somewhere to bring that ineffable peace for his daughter caught in this terrible torment of the soul. 'You were right,' he said. 'There must be a change. I am going away into the forests to be alone and when I come back I shall bring peace.' The great disciple of Ramakrishna did not know that the beatitude of peace was already with him. He was never conscious that Ramakrishna's prophecy that 'Naren would manifest his own gift

<sup>24</sup>. Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>25</sup>. Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>26</sup>. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup>. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 22.

<sup>28</sup>. Ibid., p. 298.

of bestowing knowledge with a touch' had already come true. That evening at Almora Nivedita 'proved the truth of that prophecy'. No. Vivekananda had not to go to a forest any more. His very presence was now fraught with the power of a Christ and Buddha. His holy 'touch', like Rama-krishna's, now had the power of bringing great transfiguration. No words can better describe this blessed moment of theophany, of the revelation of God within and without, than Nivedita's own words :

...Then he turned and saw that above us the moon was new, and a new sudden exclamation came into his voice as he said, 'See the Mohammedans think much of the new moon. Let us also with a new moon begin a new life!' As the words ended, he lifted his hands and blessed with silent depths of blessing, his most rebellious disciple, by this time kneeling before him. . It was assuredly a moment of wonderful sweetness of reconciliation. . For alone in meditation, I found myself gazing deep into an Infinite good, to the recognition of which no egoistic reasoning had led me And I understood, for the first time, that the greatest teachers may destroy in us a personal relation only in order to bestow the Impersonal vision in its place<sup>29</sup>

The dark night of the soul was over. It was a new dawn. For the first time she realized that 'there is a certain definite quality which may be called spirituality', that 'the soul may long for God as the heart for human love', that even so-called 'nobility or unselfishness' was but the 'feeblest and most sordid qualities compared to the fierce white light of selflessness.'<sup>30</sup> She felt 'blessed' and wrote to her friend

in London, 'India is indeed the holy land.'<sup>31</sup> Of these memorable days she again wrote, 'we have been living and breathing in the sunshine of the great religious ideals all these months, and God has been more real to us than common man'.<sup>32</sup>

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The old mother of the Shah family took us under that blessed deodar. Through traditions they knew the place and the tree, the silent witness of the memorable moment where Vivekananda's great dream on the eve of his Himalayan life was fulfilled. On the precincts of the Oakley House we stood, buried in the thoughts of how the Shiva-guru Vivekananda brought the instant conflagration of divinity in his daughter by a holy touch. Each stone in the house began to speak to us of that blessed evening in this holy abode of Shiva. Relations of Shahji now own this old house of hallowed memory. They preserve the letter of Swamiji written to Shahji. It is their talisman. The three magnificent kerosene lamps of Chinese design, used by Nivedita and others, are still preserved as holy mementoes. In the winter morning of late December we stood under the blessed deodar in the sun-blached lawn and looked straight at the magnificent snow-peaks right across the deep brown gorge below. Some of the household members by this time had gathered round us. In that vibrant silence and all-pervading peace, the tall deodar breathed. A gust of wind brought a sudden stir in its leaves. Some of us felt the 'living presence'. We realized our journey on the footprints of the Himalayan monk had seen a consummation.

<sup>29</sup>. Ibid., pp. 80-81.

<sup>30</sup>. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 13.

<sup>31</sup>. Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>32</sup>. Ibid., p. 25.

# SRI RAMAKRISHNA: THE ESTABLISHER OF DHARMA

SWAMI SATYARUPANANDA

Man has a unique capacity to take an intuitive leap out of his own mind and to know what is beyond the senses. This knowing the supersensuous is the essence of religion. Religion begins with the attempt of transcending the mind and the senses and culminates in the direct experience of the transcendental beyond the senses. Swami Vivekananda in the lecture 'Unity, the Goal of Religion', delivered in New York in 1896 said :

This universe of ours, the universe of the senses, the rational, the intellectual, is bounded on both sides by the illimitable, the unknowable, the ever unknown. Herein is the search, herein are the inquiries, here are the facts; from this comes the light which is known to the world as religion. Essentially, however, religion belongs to the supersensuous and not to the sense plane.<sup>1</sup>

Though the quest for the unknown is inherent in man, the known is apparently so charming and titillates his senses so much that man almost forgets about the unknown and becomes mad after the known, that is, the world of senses. When the known dominates the life of man, this universe of the senses becomes the only reality for him. And once the man is convinced that this universe of the senses is the only reality, then naturally he desires to enjoy worldly pleasures and sinks deep into sensuality.

A society where a larger number of human beings are dominated by the thoughts of the senses, becomes more irreligious. Morality degrades there, while immorality and unrighteousness increase.

The Hindu scriptures call this state of

affairs as *dharmaglāni*, that is, degradation of religion<sup>2</sup> or righteousness. In the Gita Lord Kṛṣṇa says 'Whenever there is decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness, O Bhārata then I incarnate myself'. Establishment of Dharma or righteousness is thus the main purpose of God's incarnation from age to age. Lord Kṛṣṇa has set forth two conditions for his incarnation, namely, *dharmaglāni* and *adharma abhyut-thānam* that is, decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness. The former is always followed by the latter. But what are the characteristics of *dharmaglāni*?

One of the characteristics of *adharma* is that it is arrogantly aggressive. It encroaches upon the field of *dharma* and assaults it without any reason. *Adharma* always tries to suppress the principles of *dharma*. Since both *dharma* and *adharma* influence and mould the character of man, the best method of recognizing *dharmaglāni* is to observe the character of those persons in whose life *dharma* has declined.

The decadence of religion begins when people ignore the transcendental aspect of religion and overemphasize the external, ritualistic and ceremonial part of it, which is confined to sense-plane only. This decadence takes place in two ways: First the followers of a religion become dogmatic and rigid. This dogmatism and rigidity give birth to fanaticism and once fanaticism sets in, it does immense harm to the very spirit of religions, and finally kills it. Rituals are like the chaff of a fruit which is necessary for the protection and ripening of the kernel. But once the kernel is ripened the chaff must be removed. Those fanatic

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) Vol. 3, p. 1.

2. The term religion has been used in this article to indicate the Hindu concept of Dharma with all its broad spectrum shades of meaning.



ritualists who adhere to the rituals only, remain religiously ill-fed and spiritually starved. Religion then becomes like a body without a soul. The so-called religious rituals become a camouflage for the so-called religious persons to hide their self-indulgence and carnality. Spirituality, the very soul of religion evaporates, and religion loses all its power of moulding characters of individuals and of influencing society. This state of affairs in the field of religion and spirituality has been termed as *dharmaglāni* in the Hindu scriptures.

Once the decline of righteousness sets in, unrighteousness increases. Human mind cannot be kept in abeyance. Man must have something to fill his mind with. When man loses interest in such higher values as spirituality and religion, worldly desires and passions rush in to fill up the vacuity of the mind. This is actually what happens when *dharma* declines. When the rise of *adharma* or unrighteousness manifests itself, materialism invades the human heart. Men do not believe in any kind of reality beyond the senses. They have no moral scruples or spiritual aims. Atheism becomes their philosophy, selfishness their guide, and sense enjoyment their practice. The *lokāyatas* or materialists of ancient times were the representatives of this kind of lower life. Their philosophy was 'eat, drink and be merry'. They used to teach, 'As long as you live, enjoy the world even by incurring loan because once the body is reduced to ashes, there is no coming over here again.' When this kind of materialism grabs the heart of man, the beast in him is unleashed, the instincts become unbridled, and egotism becomes the master of his life.

From the very ancient times this phenomenon of the downfall of *dharma* and the rise of *adharma* has been profusely illustrated in the Hindu religious symbolism. In *Rāmāyaṇa* for instance, the confrontation of Rama and Ravana represents this fact.

In the *Mahābhārata*, Kauravas led by Duryodhana were representatives of *adharma*, selfishness, egoism, and arrogance. They were constantly oppressing and fighting with the Pandavas, led by Yudhisthira, the representatives of *dharma*.

Seen in this background, Indian history presents us with a picture of a dialectical process between the forces of good, *dharma* and the forces of evil, *adharma*. As it had happened on many earlier occasions, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were the periods, when the onslaughts of *adharma* had assumed huge proportions in India. A brief survey of that period will give us an idea about the religious situation prevailing then in India.

Europeans began to come to India with the arrival of Vascoda Gama in 1498 at the Indian shore. Then came others, one after another, the Dutch, the French and the English. The repercussion of the arrival of Europeans to India was far reaching. Among all the Europeans, who came to India, English people became the rulers of India for almost two centuries. Along with English people came their language and culture. The introduction of English education in India opened the flood-gates of materialistic culture and ideas of the West. The onslaught of new ideas and ideals altered the social, moral, and religious values of the newly educated people. The impact was so great that it shook the whole nature. Calcutta was the capital of the then India, and the seat of English learning and western culture. Therefore, the effect of English education and western culture was most conspicuous in Bengal, and particularly in Calcutta. Describing the weight of this impact, historian R. C. Mazumdar writes : 'Fifty years of English education brought greater changes in the minds of the educated Hindus of Bengal than the previous thousand years'.<sup>3</sup> One of the most important educa-



tional institutions of 19th century India which helped the spreading of English Education and Western cultural ideas, was Hindu College. Writing about the condition of young students of Hindu College, R. C. Mazumdar notes : 'It is known from other sources also that a section of boys of the Hindu College gave up old religious ideas and social customs, and deliberately adopted practices most offensive to Hindu sentiments, such as drinking wine, eating beef etc.'<sup>4</sup>

The influence of English education and western culture made the young Indians ridicule and reject all that was ancient and traditional. Thus, while the educated young men of that time lost their moorings from their ancient ideals of religious and moral values, they did not have any higher and life-sustaining values to fall back upon. An incident illustrates the general trend of the mind and the people of that time. Sri Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, one of the great literary luminaries of Bengal, once met Sri Ramakrishna. The latter asked him during their conversation—'Well, what do you say about man's duties?' Bankim replied—'If you ask me about them I should say they are eating, sleeping and sex life'.<sup>5</sup> Sri Ramakrishna at once expressed his displeasure and corrected him.

Not only the social ethics and morality had gone down, but religion had been reduced to lifeless rituals. Describing the religious condition of the Hindus of that time R. C. Mazumdar observes :

So far as the Hindu masses were concerned, religion meant only an unending series of rituals and ceremonies, performed in strict accordance with scriptural rules. Many obnoxious rites were practised by the common people, and immoral customs, with belief in witchcraft and sorcery, were in vogue. These were at least

partly legacies of Tantric beliefs and practices which had a strong hold in Bengal. Religion as a source of moral purity and spiritual force exercised little influence over a large section of the common people.<sup>6</sup>

Another heavy blow to the Hindu society came from the Christian missionaries. Long before the introduction of English education, Christianity came to India. But this Christianity was the European version of the religions of Jesus the Christ, which did not represent the great life and deep love of the Messiah. Particularly, when Portuguese came to India, the Christians brought sword and fire along with the Holy Bible. The Portuguese tried to force the so-called Christianity on Hindus by force and coercion. Later, when the Britishers became the rulers of India, Christian missionaries intensified their onslaught on the religion of the land. Thus instead of imparting true religion and spirituality, proselytism became the sole aim and end of Christian missionaries. Some people, especially the younger generation educated in the Macaulay's system of English education, gave their religion up and embraced Christianity. The situation became alarming and agitated the minds of thinking Hindus. But in this land of religion and spirituality, the ancient values cannot be suppressed and subordinated for long. As a reaction, various reform movements sprang up. The first amongst these reform movements was the Brahmo Samaj.

Brahmo Samaj was founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy who was well acquainted with eastern and western thought. Though his scholarship and vast experience had made him generous, he failed to appreciate the Hindu symbolism and sadhana of image worship. He not only criticized the image worship but also opposed it strongly. Brahmo Samaj was established by him to

People, Ed. R.C. Mazumdar (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan) Vol. 10, part II, p. 89.

4. Ibid p. 90.

5. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math 1985) p. 669.

6. *The History and Culture of Indian People*, op. cit., Vol. 10, p. 26.

encounter the polytheistic doctrines and practices. Its approach to religion was thus one-sided and negative. Commenting on Ram Mohan Roy's work, a later Brahmo leader, Shivanath Shastri said: 'The mission of Ram Mohan Roy was simple, namely, to call his countrymen to discard idolatry and come to worship of One True God. His work was mainly negative and reformatory and not positive or constructive.'<sup>7</sup> In the next great leaders of Brahmo Samaj like Devendranath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen and others, a change in this rigid Brahmo attitude was perceptible. But this change was primarily due to the influence of Sri Ramakrishna on the pure and devotional mind of Keshab, who started in the Samaj chantings in the name of Hari or Divine Mother.

Another potent and powerful movement of the period which faced the challenge posed by western materialism and Christian missionaries, was Arya Samaj founded by Dayananda Saraswati. Though a great scholar of the Vedas and an unparalleled polemic of his time, he did not believe in the Hindu Puranic religion but sought to establish the superiority of the Vedas. While he accepted Vedas as the only authority, he did not accept them as a whole. He accepted only Brāhmaṇas or Samhitas and did not accept Upaniṣads as absolute authority. Not only that, Swami Dayananda Saraswati rejected the interpretation of orthodox commentators like Śāyaṇācārya, Mahīdhara and others, and did not consider any commentary to be binding on any one. He gave his own interpretation of the Vedas and his interpretation of R̥g-Veda Samhita became the bedrock of Arya Samaj. Swami Dayananda not only waged war against orthodox Hinduism but also rejected and criticized Islam and Christianity. His approach to

the problem of religion was rather aggressive and somewhat intolerant.

Besides these two major socio-religious movements, there were some local and minor religious figures like Pandit Shasadhar Tarkachudamani and others who were, in their own limited way, defending traditional Hinduism, image worship and Hindu institutions during those days.

All these great reformers and the reform movements were one-sided. Hence their impact was not deep enough to face the crisis that the Hindu religion and society was passing through. The degeneration was so deep that nothing short of a radical transformation of human consciousness and a 'root and branch reform' of the Hindu society, could avert the crisis. During the period, unrighteousness or *adharma* had come in the form of materialism through western education and culture. Therefore, righteousness or *dharma* was to be established by demonstrating the futility of materialism and the utility and importance of spiritual ideals in life. As Swami Vivekananda observed, 'Here (in India) is the life-giving water with which must be quenched the burning fire of materialism which is burning the core of the hearts of millions in other lands. Believe me, my friend this is going to be.'<sup>8</sup>

It was at such a period of domination of the materialism in India that Sri Ramakrishna appeared on the scene. He brought forth, through his superhuman effort, this life-giving water from the springs of his own historic sadhana and varied divine realizations, and thus quenched the thirst of millions of souls. Through spirituality alone, he revitalized the Hindu society. Born with a sense of mission Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated through his exemplary life, the redeeming power of religion and spirituality. Writing about his mission, one noted authority observes :

7. Ibid. p. 21.

8. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1973) op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 105.

Sri Ramakrishna had the conviction that his life had a divine purpose, that it was intended to demonstrate the truth of religion in this age, when human beings were steeped in materialism, in atheism, scepticism and agnosticism. He came in a very dark age, spiritually speaking, though materially one might say it was a very advanced age. People had scientific knowledge but spiritually, it was one of the darkest ages in human history. He was convinced that his life had a purpose—that he was to establish in the first place the reality of God, secondly, to demonstrate the truths of the various spiritual disciplines<sup>9</sup>

It is interesting to see how Sri Ramakrishna addressed himself to the task of facing the challenge of western materialism and atheism in his own way. One of the charms of western education was its 'bread-winning' quality. Because of this, people were mad after it and did not care for the higher values of life. Acquiring bread-winning education had almost become the aim and object of life of all the newly educated persons. When Gadadhar, the premonastic name of Sri Ramakrishna, was sixteen or seventeen years old, his elder brother Ram Kumar, himself a scholar and a teacher, brought his younger brother with him to Calcutta and wanted to give him the kind of education which might win bread for him and his family. Gadadhar did not take any interest in it. Noticing this, one day when Ram Kumar admonished him for not paying attention to his studies, Gadadhar gave his celebrated reply which is one of the life-saving gospels for modern man. He told his elder brother, 'I do not want to learn the art of "bundling rice and plantain". What I do want is to have that which produces right knowledge and enables man truly to achieve the aim of his life.'<sup>10</sup>

9. Swami Satprakashananda, *Sri Ramakrishna's Life and Message in the Present Age* (Missouri: Vedanta Society of St. Louis, 1976) p. 23.

10. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1970) p. 110.

He refused to prosecute the bread-winning education and demonstrated through his life that the aim of education was not earning money and accumulating material wealth. The real aim of education was to acquire that knowledge which gave spiritual illumination and enabled one to manifest the God in him.

Thus, while intense renunciation and longing for God was a burning passion in his life, the mode of expression of this longing was equally significant. It was pointed out earlier how Sri Ramakrishna's forerunners and contemporaries were vehement opponents of idol worship and thought it to be one of the banes of ancient Aryan religion. Sri Ramakrishna was to demonstrate that the Aryan religion was not wrong in accepting idol worship as a potent means of God-realization. In 1856 after the death of his elder brother, Sri Ramakrishna accepted the office of the priest in the Kali temple at Dakshineswar. For him the image of Kali was not a mere idol but a living Mother Goddess and a conscious entity. With this deep conviction, he applied his mind fully to the worship of the Divine Mother with the sole desire of having Her vision. Writing about the mode of his worship, his biographer records: '.... his mode of worship was different from that of ordinary Brahmins, in that he looked upon the image as the veritable representation of God and treated it as such'. While singing devotional songs his heart used to be filled with spiritual emotions. Forgetting the whole world including his own body he used to pray to the Divine Mother to grant him Her vision. This longing for the vision of the Divine Mother grew so intense that he was not aware how the days passed into nights and vice versa. Describing this state of his, his biographer records :

So great was his yearning for God that twelve strenuous years passed in a state of divine

intoxication, during half of which period he did not close his eyes in sleep. Unconscious of hunger, thirst, or any of the cravings of the body, or of the things happening around him, Sri Ramakrishna during that period of sadhana, was almost like a mad man. Day after day, month after month, year after year he was immersed in the depths of that intense spiritual fervour.

When he could no more bear this life without the vision of the Divine Mother, She revealed Herself to him in the image he was worshipping. Thus he showed that man could reach the pinnacle of spiritual realization through idol worship also. The idol was as good a symbol of the Supreme Reality, as the non-idol symbols. What was needed was intense devotion to the chosen ideal, and longing for spiritual realization.

But Sri Ramakrishna did not rest satisfied with the realization of the Divine Mother in the image he was worshipping. He performed various kinds of sadhana under the competent Gurus like Bhairavi Brahmani and Totapuri. He also went through the Islamic sadhana of Sufism under a Sufi Guru, Govinda Roy. He experienced two visions of Christ. In the picture of Madonna and the Child he saw the living presence of the Christ. Then again, under the Panchavati of Dakshineswar he had the vision of the Christ, the compassionate and the saviour.

Sri Ramakrishna concluded his sadhanas in the year 1873 by performing the worship of Sodasi, the Divine Mother in the person of his wife, Sri Sarada Devi. The result of his superhuman sadhana was that his individual soul merged into the universal Soul and became one with it. As his biographer records, 'It will not, therefore, be improper to say that from then on he performed all the actions of his life under the impulse of the divine mood.'<sup>11</sup> He was

thus established in the divine mood, in which he saw God in everything. Under the inspiration of this mood he now engaged himself in the work of the establishment of Dharma. Writes his biographer :

his divine mood was in one continuous flow and the mission of his life was clearly and definitely undertaken. We find him firmly taking his stand against western materialism and the culture and civilization based on material science. For, it had entered India and made the men and women of the country assume an outlook on life which was contrary to that of the eternal religion and was daily weaning them from it. So he applied himself whole-heartedly to the introduction of true religion among these English educated people, so that through his guidance the lives of the people in general might be blessed with the light divine.<sup>12</sup>

What was this 'true religion' by which the lives of the people are blessed with the 'light divine'? Giving the essence of this 'true religion', Swami Vivekananda, the famous apostle of Sri Ramakrishna wrote :

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling nature external and internal. Do this either by work or worship or psychic control or philosophy—by one or more or all of these and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas or rituals or books or temples or forms are but secondary details.<sup>13</sup>

This is the essence of religion. Man is divine. He is not matter. Therefore, only material life cannot satisfy him for long. Man can never have fulfilment in life merely by enjoying the material world through the senses. Immediate and direct experience of the divine only can quench the eternal thirst of man for fulfilment and peace. Realization of this divine within is the essence of religion. Each and every

11. *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, op. cit., p. 681.

12. *Ibid.* p. 682.

13. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (1977) p. 257.

human being irrespective of sex, caste, creed, colour or nationality can realize it. The different religions of the world are only various paths or means of realizing this divine within. Therefore, there cannot be any dispute among them. There are differences in individual persons. Their interests and needs are also different. Hence there are different religions according to the needs and interests of the individuals and groups. Each and every religion is fit to lead man to divine realization provided he follows it sincerely. This fact was demonstrated in the exemplary life of Sri Ramakrishna. Speaking about this divine teacher of the world, Swami Vivekananda said :

The time was ripe for one to be born who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Shankara and the wonderfully expansive, infinite heart of Chaitanya ; one who would see in every sect the same spirit working, the same God, one who would see God in every being, one whose heart would weep for the poor, for the weak, for the outcast, for the downtrodden, for every one in this world, inside India or outside India and at the same time whose grand brilliant intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonise all conflicting sects not only in India but outside India and bring a marvellous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart into existence. Such a man was

born and I had the good fortune to sit at his feet for years.<sup>14</sup>

The need of the hour as well as the long lasting solution to the problem of human existence, was the establishment of the eternal religion. The world was in need of a religion having the provisions for worshipping personal as well as impersonal God, and the recognition of all the religious paths as leading to the realization of One and the same Reality. The life of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna was a living example of this universal religion. As Mahatma Gandhi writes : 'The story of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's life is a story of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face'<sup>15</sup> His divine life, thus demonstrated that God does exist, that religion is practical and that man can realize God here and now. Thus by living a great and historic life of God realization in all its aspects, Sri Ramakrishna once again established *dharma* and thus saved the world from the destructive clutches of *adharma* that came with the flood of modern materialism.

14. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (1973) Vol. 3, p 267

15. *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976) in the 'Foreword',

## SCIENCE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

DR. M. LAKSHMI KUMARI

Science has become a way of living in this 20th century and may become more so in the 21st century towards which we are already thrusting. Yet to most of us, science is only a world of machines and mechanistic approaches to the problems of day-to-day life. Hardly anybody bothers to maintain the scientific temper with regard

to one's own life. It is the absence of this basic attitude that is creating so much disharmony in our individual and collective lives. However, in recent years there is emerging a new awareness that human development is also a precise science. It is, in fact, the basis of all other sciences, and there is an urgent need to delve into the

mysteries of this knowledge and explore its immense practical possibilities for the enrichment of human life at all levels.

The discovery that man is not just a collection of organic molecules endowed with a perfect mechanism of thought, speech and action but is something more has engaged the minds of the Indian people since ancient times. Behind this perishable body and mind is the imperishable Reality. This inner Reality, known as the Atman or Self is considered the one Truth to which all efforts, studies and movements should lead, just as in present-day scientific investigations all efforts seem to lead finally to a unifying concept. The knowledge of the Self was developed and perfected as a precise science and used by our ancient *rishis* or seers (scientists?) to achieve man's multi-dimensional evolution towards real manhood or supermanhood. *Gurukulas*, the homes of our ancient teachers, were the centres of this man-making education and training which were designed to bring out man's inherent perfection and excellence in all departments of life, be it a pursuit of truth or fighting in battlefields.

Science in essence is a search for unity. All true enquiries, internal or external, would ultimately lead to the discovery of the basic oneness of the universe. The search for the ultimate in knowledge is the essence of the scientific temperament. In ancient India the knowledge of the basic solidarity of the universe blossomed into a spiritual or yogic culture, and the lives of the people were regulated by rational, universal laws and natural rhythms; and they lived in the full realization of their spiritual oneness with the entire universe, in total communion with the whole nature. Ethics, morality, social life and international dealings, all these bore the impress of this universal vision and harmony.

The knowledge of the omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, immortal Self as the

substratum of all that exists, dominated Indian thought for centuries and permeated in one way or other all aspects of life in our country. The awareness of the ultimate spiritual oneness of all existence of which man himself is a part, gave him the courage and wisdom to stand apart and watch the flow of life without being affected by the dualities in life. The Indian concepts of *viveka*, *vairāgya*, *tyāga*, *sevā*, *yajna* etc. came into being as off-shoots of this unitive knowledge.

However, with the passage of time, the general decline in the calibre of human personality made Indians more and more indifferent to these essential principles and values of life and dragged him down to a life centred in sensual pursuits. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa pointed out in the Gita, the great science of yoga got almost lost after long lapse of time. Fortunately, however, the eternal Truth has within it the power of its guaranteed preservation and perpetuation. In the course of millennia, whenever there was a large-scale prevalence of negative values or *adharma* in the land, some great soul appeared on the scene and re-established the balance with positive forces or *dharma* in the society.

A great set-back came with the arrival on the national scene of an alien culture totally addicted to materialistic values and mechanistic ways of life. But today this ancient way of life is being acclaimed again, after a lapse of a few centuries as the most scientific and modern. In the new terminology this way is known as a 'systemic', 'systematic' or 'holistic' way of life by eminent scientists, and sociologists. Swami Vivekananda felt the vibrations of this change even during his life-time. To quote him: 'The thoughtful men of the West find in our ancient philosophy, especially in the Vedānta, the new impulse of thought they are seeking, the very spiritual food and

drink for which they are hungering and thirsting.'

In our own country this wholesome science of life had been suitably modified and upgraded as 'Yugadharma' to suit the contemporary conditions of the different ages, by the seers or men of God-realization. A very practical exposition of this science of human development is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave to Arjuna, to cure him of his despondency when faced with the challenge of the battle of Kurukshetra. This knowledge transformed him into a man of action and a maker of destiny. Therein lies the clue as to the usefulness of this knowledge to one and all of us who have constantly to live with tension, anxiety, hurry, unfulfilled desires, self-pity, and boredom.

Śankara's Advaitic insight added a new rational lustre to this science. In our living memory, Sri Ramakrishna manifested the essence of this wonderful science of integrated living in his own immaculate life and practically demonstrated the onward evolution of man into Godhood, based on this knowledge.

Swami Vivekananda fully recognized the great importance and practical utility of this knowledge for the qualitative enrichment of human life in the modern context. He crystallized and codified it into practical Vedanta. One of the finest preambles to this Vedanta or the 'science of the soul' as he used to call it, has been given by Swamiji in the following immortal sentences: 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal: Do this either by work or worship, or psychic control or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free.'

In the above definition all the major facets of this 'science of soul' stand out. The first and foremost concerns the real nature of man. Only a knowledge of this

can provide him with the necessary clues for his further advancement. The second aspect concerns the various techniques available to man for the multi-dimensional unfoldment of his capacities. The last and most pertinent to us today is the great relevance and practical utility of this knowledge, in fighting the battle of life in the modern context of decay and decadence of human values.

For scores of centuries all our great ṛṣis have emphasized that the self or Atman in every being is eternal, immortal, perfect and infinite. Death means only a change of its centre from one body to another. Sword cannot pierce it, nor the fire burn it. Water cannot melt nor air dry it. This soul is held in bondage by matter, but is not conditioned by it. In its very essence it is free, unbounded, holy, pure and perfect. Somehow it finds itself tied down to matter and thinks of itself as matter. Perfection will be reached when this bond will break bringing freedom from imperfection, death, and misery.

Therefore the scriptures enjoin on man the necessity of self-knowledge in the dictum—'know thyself'. This search has to be done not outside, in the relative world of phenomenon but inside within the depths of the human mind. Search for this Truth was therefore considered the noblest of occupations surpassing all other material pursuits, the *summum bonum* of existence. This self was further recognized as Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. This self-knowledge has remained the central focusing point or the basis of the Indian way of life or *Sana'tana dharma*. On such an understanding were based further discoveries of the laws that govern the spiritual world; the moral, ethical and spiritual relations between individual selves and finally the microcosm and the macrocosm. From the transient, ephemeral, and finite, to the eternal, infinite, and spiritual is the direction and course of



all evolution. Every soul is destined to be perfect and every being in the end will attain to that state. In that lies the be-all and end-all of existence, the ultimate rest and peace which every one seeks consciously or unconsciously. Swami Vivekananda has put it succinctly : 'The finite can find its ultimate rest when classified into the infinite.' Unification of all energies and forces within us in order to realize this potential divinity of the soul within, and manifesting it outside through one's thoughts, words and deeds or linking up the truth of inner reality with the truth of outer life is the highest aim of life. When this spiritual vision comes to us, we can link up the microcosm with the macrocosm, man and the Almighty. To become divine, to see God, becoming perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect, constitute the basic aspiration of the Hindu way of life.

Vivekananda's definition provides us also with the technique for the development of the human personality in the way indicated above. 'Control of nature, external and internal : Do it either by work or worship, psychic control or philosophy, by one, or more, or all of these and be free', Swamiji said. Body, mind and intellect together form the instruments available for man in his search for Truth. Firstly, he must understand what stands between him and his realization of truth, and eliminate these obstacles one by one. Indulgence at the body level pulls us down. Turbulence of mind and vagaries of intellect, tempt man into the world of senses. Straying there like a ship without a rudder, he loses himself.

The four-fold paths of self-development or yogas prescribed in our scriptures catch man where he is and provide him with the guidance and techniques to move towards his goal. A close scrutiny of these techniques—work, worship, psychic control and philosophy—would reveal that in each of them the goal is to make man get rid of

his foolish, ego-centric attachment to his little self, and his insatiable thirst for self-gratification. These four-fold paths help us to shift man's attention to more eternal, and universal values of life. Karma Yoga prescribes self-sacrifice through actions without attachment. Unconditional self-surrender is what Bhakti Yoga aims at. Rāja Yoga emphasizes great self-control and Jñāna Yoga takes man to the pinnacle of glory through self-analysis, tearing off the veil of false knowledge and goading the mind to its final realization. All these paths easily commingle in a man of perfection. According to Vivekananda, a complete man must combine all the four yogas in his own life. He must be equally active, equally mystical, equally intellectual, and equally emotional in his search for Truth.

What is the relevance of this great science of self-development in man's life today? The world is standing at cross-roads. Man's craze to control external nature without learning to control his internal nature has resulted in over-population, large scale industrial pollutions, irreparable occupational hazards, ignorance, insecurity, problems of unemployment, poverty, widespread exploitation of men, women, and children and some of the major social problems turning men into brutes. These have led to a world situation characterized by self-assertion, competition, excessive consumerism, rapid exploitation of natural resources, wasteful production and consumption, intolerance and violence in personal and public life, leading ultimately to self-annihilation. We have to carve out a new destiny for mankind which would usher in a bright dawn of fulfilment in man's life and provide for universal understanding, cooperation and social justice. Where man is at peace with himself he will also be at peace with the world around him. In this context what will ultimately restore sanity to man is an intense awareness of the self

within him, and within all others. The essential spirituality of all life is the basis of oneness, of Advaita, of the 'holistic' vision of life, as we call it today.

The cause of all misery is ignorance of the fundamental oneness of life. This is true everywhere either in social or in spiritual life. It is ignorance of our oneness that makes us hate each other. It is due to this ignorance that we do not know and do not love each other. As soon as we come to know our fundamental oneness, love comes, understanding comes and goodness comes. Good deeds and thoughts are the only way to manifest our innate divinity and reveal its natural perfection.

An awareness of this innate divinity of man, of the Absolute Self within all of us is dawning in the West today. The first refrains of this universal symphony are already being heard from the most unusual quarters, from the curious youth in the affluent countries searching for an alternate

way of life, other than of competition, aggrandizement and war-mongering. Many social reformers today are intent on creating in this way a new rhythm in the lives of thousands of dejected and demoralized men and women. Innumerable wealthy and affluent people are rejecting the life of luxury and comfort and adopting the style of voluntary simplicity and total renunciation. Last but not the least, the highly sophisticated super-scientists are beginning to knock at the door of the superconscious.

The deep interest, the world over, in this science of human development is a movement in the right direction. Fortunately, the modern scientific discoveries are also pointing to human consciousness as the last word in perfection. The more its faculties are understood and appreciated by man, the more would be the enrichment of man's life, in terms of efficiency, capacity to work, to love, and live in peace and harmony with himself and his surroundings.

## A PILGRIMAGE TO MT. LOWE

BRAHMACHARINI BHAVANI

In 1894, an elegant, unique, seventy-bedroom hotel was built atop a mountain in southern California. Called the Echo Mountain House, it was located on Mt. Lowe in the San Gabriel Range, about 20 miles northeast of Pasadena. A visitor to the hotel had a spectacular view in every direction—looking out onto a wide expanse of mountain peaks and valleys, or gazing down on the dwarfed cities of Pasadena and Los Angeles. In fact, the view worked both ways, for the residents of these cities could look up and see a bright star: the white dome of the hotel spotlighted by a huge searchlight.

The hotel became quite famous in its day,

not only for its panoramic view, but also for its isolated inaccessability. Transporting visitors to and from the hotel was accomplished solely by means of a funicular or cable railway built up the side of the mountain.

In January 1900, Swami Vivekananda visited this hotel with Josephine MacLeod, Mr. and Mrs. Baumgardt and Mrs. Leggett. In testament of this fact is a photograph of him standing in the centre of one of the funicular cars. Swamiji stayed overnight at the hotel and probably visited the nearby Lowe Observatory, which was equipped with an excellent telescope. The next day he gave a talk and then took an excursion

further up Mt. Lowe, a 1,500-metre peak.

Three weeks after Swamiji was there, the hotel burned to the ground and was never restored. Lying undisturbed for over 80 years, the ruins are now part of the Angeles National Forest. After discovering in 1984 that there was a foot-path up to the ruins, a yearly pilgrimage was initiated and organized by the Vedanta Society of Southern California.

In 1986, Swami Swahananda joined the pilgrimage along with twenty-eight devotees ranging in age from sixteen to seventy. We met at the Vivekananda House, the Pasadena home where Swamiji stayed for six weeks with the Mead sisters during his second visit to the West. From this house, we drove in a caravan to the base of the mountain. At ten o'clock A.M., wearing backpacks containing food and water for the all-day hike, we set out on our walk up to the ruins. It was the middle of May, and as we began, it felt only slightly warmer than a typical spring day.

We set out on our journey fresh, eager and enthusiastic, but after an hour of cheerful walking and talking, we soon realized that the path was not as easy as we had anticipated. We began to feel hot and fatigued. The climb was quite steep and strenuous—almost straight up the side of the mountain—and as the temperature rose to 100°F, the full force of the noonday sun bore down on the side of the mountain we were climbing. Since there were no trees in this brush country, there was precious little shade in which to hide from the relentless rays of the sun.

As it got hotter and hotter, we began to stop more often in any little stray piece of shade we could find, to catch our breath and quench our thirst. Even with these frequent stops, however, the arduous climb proved too much for several of the devotees, and they had to return back down the mountain—hot, tired and discouraged. The

rest of us pushed onward and upward, dousing ourselves with water whenever we could.

There came a time during our climb when we felt as though we would never get to the top. Looking back, we could see how high up we had climbed, but gazing ahead there was no way of knowing how far we had yet to go. It was around one o'clock P.M., and after walking straight up for almost three hours in the tenacious heat, we were all exhausted and barely able to move. Faith alone took us to the top, and when at last the summit was visible ahead, we were elated and our initial enthusiasm for the pilgrimage returned. Our elation increased as we approached the ruins of the old Echo Mountain House where Swami Vivekananda stayed eighty-six years ago.

We found a shady spot close to where the old hotel had stood. The welcome shade was provided by a garden of various trees and plants that had probably been originally planted for the hotel, since they were not indigenous to the area. After lunch, we read the section from Marie Louise Burke's book, *Swami Vivekananda: His Second Visit to the West*, detailing Swamiji's visit to Mt. Lowe (pp. 214-6). Then each devotee read a selected quotation from Swami Vivekananda, and 'Murta Maheshwara' was enthusiastically sung. Swami Swahananda then gave a short talk, after which we took a detailed tour of the ruins.

The first thing we saw was a huge, iron wheel which apparently had been used for pulling the cable line. A few yards beyond the iron wheel, there was a cliff which dropped off sharply. At our feet, the railway lines for the funicular cars were still intact. We followed the lines to the cliff edge, at which point they seemed to disappear. Looking over the edge of the cliff, however, we could see where and how the funicular

Renaissance seems largely a breaking through that alliance, back to the *lux ex Oriente* which had never stopped shining!

But the exclusivism died hard—if indeed it ever *did* die. The Italian 'Renaissance' seems never to have looked much further East than Greece or Asia Minor. And though with it went some revival of travel and commercial ties with the far East, there is hardly a trace of revival of Indian *thought* in Europe till at least the 18th century. As we shall show, all students of the Transcendentalists before Christy, tended to stress, not the Indian sources of the Transcendental thought, but the 'representations' thereof, which had been rediscovered in Europe a century earlier. Coming mainly *via* the Neo-platonists and other liberal, mystical Greek and Alexandrian schools, these teachings covered large areas of Hindu thought.<sup>6</sup> By the 19th century these thoughts had become rather respectable and acceptable to liberal Western Christianity.<sup>7</sup>

etc. are gross generalizations, omitting for example, disintegration of trade routes, high risks for missionaries and other cultural exchange. But still one must explain the attenuation of the treasures of Oriental wisdom built up in the previous millennium. And in this regard the phenomenon of Judeo-Christian exclusivism seems basic. Cf: Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) pp. 267ff. and 286ff for definitive summary of the origin and consequences of the concept of 'The Chosen People'. As he says, 'How odd of God to choose the Jews!' (p. 290).

6. Cf. Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism* (the book under review) pp. 49-51. Also Swami Ashokananda, *Influence of Indian Thought on the Thought of the West* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1931) pages 26ff, specially as to the Raja Yoga.

7. 'Respectable', i.e. as compared to the Vedanta itself! It seems obvious that informed Christian devotees since earliest times must have feared any approach to Indian religions—at least as threat to their beliefs in once-for-all Incarnation, vicarious Atonement, hell for

Still, how long could the roots of Oriental thought remain thus hidden? All the revolutionary tendencies in 19th century science were fostering among Christians doubt and investigation, which inevitably included rays from the East! And in America this appeared first and most notably in New England, home of the lineal and spiritual descendants of the boldest Western seekers of Light. Further, as Christy notes, the remarkable group in Concord, Massachusetts, 'was a unique entity, representative of Transcendentalism as a whole'.<sup>8</sup> And among them, the three on whom Christy focusses (Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott) were outspoken about their debt to India and the East. Yet even they tended more and more to minimize direct references to India,<sup>9</sup> since these often led to sharp criticism, even from good friends. As they grew older, learning more of human nature's adamant resistance to change, this tendency increased. Like Vivekananda, they sought Truth, with scant concern for its label. Even today our Swamis advise devotees who have responsibilities in the world: 'Sure, tell the truth to all; but without need to say where you found it, unless you know the hearers will appreciate!'

Thus almost a century passed before any major work undertook to get back to the facts in question. As Christy puts it: 'As yet (1932) there does not exist a single comprehensive study of the Oriental influence on Occidental thought.'<sup>10</sup> Again,

infidels, etc. Even the miracles would have to go: India's Yogis could equal any such, even resurrection from the dead.

8. Christy, op. cit., p. 8.

9. Similarly their reference to Persia, China, etc.; but these usually were more acceptable to Yankees in those days.

10. Christy, op. cit., pp. 48-49. He proceeds to praise Carpenter's 'valuable pioneering work': (cf: footnote no. 2) 'the only book devoted to the subject in the American field.'

he carefully outlines the limitations of his own study and quotes a remarkable passage from Romain Rolland:<sup>11</sup> 'It would be a matter of deep interest to know exactly how far the American spirit had been impregnated, directly or indirectly, by the infiltration of Hindu thought during the XIXth century ...' Christy continues, 'This book may be considered as an attempt to write the first chapter of the general study Rolland suggests ...'<sup>12</sup>

As it happened, Christy's 'first chapter ...' was so well done that we do not find anything approaching its value until, recently, another remarkable book came to our notice. This is Carl T. Jackson's *The Oriental Religions and American Thought—Nineteenth Century Explorations*.<sup>13</sup> This obviously has a much broader scope. Yet, as noted at the outset, the half-century since 1932 has seen but scanty attention to

but obviously not 'comprehensive'. We may add that the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1976) in its approximately 3,600 words on Emerson, had not a word on India, or Hinduism, etc.; nor in its major article on Transcendentalism. Still, by 1976 comes a ray of light: the word 'Hindu' appears... just once!

11. In 'America at the Time of Vivekananda's First Visit' *Prabuddha Bharata* (May 1930) (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama) p. 224. at the very start of the article by Rolland.

12. Christy, op. cit., p. vii.

13. Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn, and London, 1981. On pages 45-46 he refers to '... Christy, who did more than any other scholar to launch the modern investigation of Asian influences in American history'. We must of course note a few other studies: (1) Rao-Rayopati, *Early American Interest in Vedanta* (Asia Publishing House, 1973); (2) Riepe, *Philosophy of India and Its Impact on American Thought* (Illinois: Chas. Thomas Co. Springfield 1970); (3) Paul Carter, *Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (Northern Illinois University Press, 1971). But the first seems nowhere near so carefully done as Christy's, often giving opinions instead of facts; the second seems prone to inaccuracies; the last, though nicely done, covers only the era 1865-1895.

Christy's work among us, the Vedantists. Most of our alert and learned acquaintances, including several who themselves have written on our Vedantic heritage, have hardly heard mention of Christy, despite the four reprintings of his work (cf. footnote 1). By contrast, Wendell Thomas' *Hinduism Invades America*—like Christy's, started as doctoral dissertation at Columbia (1930).<sup>14</sup> But as it deals almost wholly with post-Vivekananda America, it refers only rarely to the subject.

Here lies a clue to our faint and tardy appreciation of a work like Christy's. Do the American Vedantins really *care* to know what happened in this benighted hemisphere before 1893? It is a perfectly natural tendency to think, 'obviously our Hero (Vivekananda) had the power to bring about the whole wonderful change since then; so why bother with the feeble struggles which preceded him?'<sup>15</sup> Christy's book itself would be sufficient answer; but one further less-known study should be mentioned here, viz. Swami Ashokananda's booklet *The Influence of Indian Thought on the Thought of the West*.<sup>16</sup> It was published just before the Swami came to the West. He was working as the Editor of our *Prabuddha Bharata* through 1930s. The booklet was based on another passage in Rolland's book. In this passage Rolland seemed to contradict himself urging,<sup>17</sup> 'I

14. Published by Beacon Press, New York, 1930.

15. Josephine MacLeod ('Tantine') said of Swami's stature: 'Men like Kaiser Wilhelm were so big that in their presence all others looked small. Swami was so big that he made others look bigger.' Surely, then to discover *bigness* in Vivekananda's predecessors, will make him, who still towers above them, look bigger still!

16. See footnote no. 6. It seems clear that Christy had never heard of this.

17. As quoted by Ashokananda, in the above booklet, page 6.

do not think that in India or any other country there has ever been the origin of a divine revelation. I give the honour for it to God who is in every living being. He alone is the source .... In face of the Eternal there can be no question of priority ...' Such lines from Romain Rolland seemed to confuse his proposition we quoted earlier (cf. footnote 11, as we have noted above, Swami Ashokananda was then the Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*) regarding his 'deep interest' in 'the infiltration of Hindu thought during the nineteenth century'! Then, with all due respect for Rolland's genius and friendship for India, the Swami proceeds in 40 pages, to outline, not one century merely, but the entire sweep of history including the history since Greece and Persia in Buddhist times. And with it he masterfully documents in his own thesis :

It is true that when one realizes the truth, one realizes it *oneself* and not by proxy. But even in such individual realizations, outside help is largely necessary. The fact that certain truths are potential in a man does not preclude the possibility of his being helped by others in discovering them. Considering the anti-spiritual ideas that fill the human mind and lower nature, outside help seems absolutely necessary.. All have the Divinity within them, but all do not realize it. The Divine Truth is extremely difficult of access, the Eternal has created men with their senses all going outward and therefore they do not see the Self within... The 'natural' tendency of human mind is to revel in the objective life. It has taken thousands of years for certain peoples to conceive the necessity of reversing the 'natural' tendency. Stern discipline has been necessary.. I beg to differ from Mr. Rolland. The Vedantic is not the 'natural' thought for mankind. When through a reversal of the natural process, through self-discipline and deep faith men turn inward, take to Nivritti, then the higher nature of man asserts itself, and then only the Vedantic thought appears natural to them, if of course there has been also the necessary intellectual development and change of outlook..<sup>18</sup>

18. Ashokananda, op. cit., pp. 6-9.

Here the Swami brilliantly outlines the need for this change of outlook : nowhere have we found a better *apologia* for ourselves in attempting to trace such 'intellectual' helps from India. It seems clear that Christy never saw this (or any other) work of Ashokananda's ; if he had, we are quite sure he would have been more benefited. Not that he *needed* confirmation of his own deep sense of the worthwhileness of tracing out the Orient in American Transcendentalism. But he was careful to point out the limitations of mere book-knowledge. From his Preface :

The Concord [Transcendentalist] approach was the approach of the poet and mystic.. Now it is a difficult task to account for the dreams and ecstasies of mystics. They are men who crush the centuries as the sections of a telescope, and staunchly declare that they must get beyond time and space and rely more on intuition than reason . ' (pp. viii-ix).

#### —to his Conclusion

Emersonian thought was almost pure mysticism. Men may have to it by recognition, but never by conviction. It was a religious instinct that spoke through the Concordians, and only those who had ears to hear could receive...It was not essentially a new departure in literature such as the Romantic Movement which Wordsworth and Coleridge represented. It was, rather, a peculiarly blended religious and philosophical approach to life.<sup>19</sup>

—Christy lays respectful stress on this mysticism, which takes one beyond all books. 'The highest beatitude which the mystic can seek is the perfection of the spiritual sense which will enable him to see and know nothing but God as The Essence interpenetrating all matter ... the oneness of subject and object, of substance and shadow ...'<sup>20</sup> And, time and again, Christy shows or implies that Vedanta was

19. Christy, op. cit., pp. 266-7.

20. Ibid., p. 92.



the source of most such insights among the New England Transcendentalists. For example :

This use of many of the cardinal doctrines of the Vedanta as an expression of his own beliefs, is the most interesting feature of Emerson's Orientalism. And the first parallel is that of Brahma and the Over-Soul. Now the human mind has never produced an idealism as extreme as that of the Vedanta, which would insist that the Absolute God is as much in Picadilly Circus as in the most immaculate madonna.<sup>21</sup>

As it happens, Christy had already summed up for us (page 73) the value both of mystic contemplation and outer help : 'He (Emerson) felt that the wisest investment of life was ... in making up his own Bible by hearkening to the voice within ... in the nursery rhyme as well as the classics of the world ...'<sup>22</sup> He continues quoting Emerson (about 'these spiritual log-books')<sup>23</sup>. 'When the intervals of darkness come ... when the sun is hid and the stars withdraw ... we repair to the lamps which were

kindled by their ray, to guide our steps to the East again ...'

By now it is clear that Emerson, Thoreau, Alcott and their friends were *eclectic* in their seeking. Thus, of course, led to considerable criticism. We, too, are likely to be reminded of the Brahmo Samaj—often compared to a bouquet of flowers without roots (i.e. in some Great Soul)—or one of our Community Churches which usually have a Unitarian nucleus but elements from many other great religions. We, being fortunate to have come upon a Great Soul (Ramakrishna) who had both great intensity (depth) and breadth enough for any Eclectic, can well agree with Tulsidas, 'Sit with all, take the sweetness of all, say "Yea, Yea" to all; but keep your own seat firm.'

But for Emerson and friends, most of their theological roots (or 'seats') were being shattered by modern science, historical research etc. Thus, while holding firmly to the grand moral, ethical roots in Puritanism, they simply *had* to be eclectic as to metaphysics and resulting dogmas.<sup>24</sup> And as they had no Ramakrishna to turn to, while the shining light of Jesus was for them near-hidden under conventional 'Christianity', their discoveries of new roots had to be in the realm of the Impersonal.

Naturally, Christy, having little acquaintance with Sri Ramakrishna's teaching<sup>25</sup> praises the eclecticism—even what was often smiled at as 'borrowing' (pp. 3 to 6),

21. Ibid., p 74. Here 'Picadilly Circus' (standing for vulgarity) is in refutation of a jibe by G. K. Chesterton. The reader will note that, throughout, we minimize the part of Thoreau in all this, since the 'Profiles in Greatness' ('Thoreau—the First Sannyasin of America') in *Prabuddha Bharata*, for March, 1985 has largely covered his part.

22. Elsewhere, Christy stresses Emerson and Thoreau's 'borrowing' quotations, 'in no stealthy or shame-faced way but proudly, bravely.' (pp. 3-5, and others).

23. 'Log-books' refers presumably to Journals and other writings of mystics. Obviously here again is paradox: cf. Emerson's classic remark, 'a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds', i.e., many of the greatest mystics never wrote, rarely even spoke; thus their teaching and influence *can* spread without outer helps. Yet our Transcendentalists learned so much from outer helps; indeed if it were not so, we in turn would hardly know of them! (Note. footnotes nos. 22 & 23 are both from p. 73 of the book).

24. Now we can clarify the paradox noted in footnote 23 and related texts; viz. Emerson's 'voice within' was wonderfully responsive to voices from without: the Inner Light shone best on things or ideas attuned to it. Cf. Rolland's well-known words on the electric-shock-like effect of Vivekananda's words on him.

25. We find only one mention of either Ramakrishna or Vivekananda in the whole book (pp. 269-70 and that is of Ramakrishna's worship of all—even street-walkers—as Mother's manifestation. (quoted from Max Muller).



'nibbling', etc. And though, as a Christian, Christy must have been saddened that they were so far from Jesus, he never suggests criticism of their search, nor of their absence of much personal devotion to Kṛṣṇa and other Avatars. But in his admirable description of the charm of the *Gītā* for the Concordians,<sup>26</sup> he stresses 'the new concept of *bhakti* or loving devotion' to this 'God (Kṛṣṇa) who participated actively in the affairs of the world ...' (Here he mentions particularly *Bhagavad-Gītā*, IV, 6-8, as to the Lord's descent to mankind when need arises). Further, quoting *Gītā* (IX : 33-34) he notes, 'The invitation accorded to Arjuna even had possibilities of Christian interpretation ...' And he goes on to stress the *Gītā*'s stress on eclecticism, for which reason 'few books could have been more congenial to the Concordians.'<sup>27</sup>

So, we emerge from this heart-warming book with a clear picture of what is doubtless the most remarkable outcropping<sup>28</sup> of the Vedānta outside India. Of course there have been recurring spontaneous appearances of Vedānta in its universal sense such as Meister Eckhart and his friends, Brother Lawrence, the Quakers, and others as suggested by Rolland (cf. footnote 16). But there had no known written or verbal access to Hindu ideas; and our concern is

26. See, e.g. Christy's admirable outline of the prompt and joyous discovery of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* by the Transcendentalists (pp 23-29). Here as throughout, the facts are readily confirmable, if we take time to search; but Christy was the first to put them together in readable form.

27. It seems they at once grasped the eclecticism found in the *Gītā*; whereas, even in India, dozens of sects still do not.

28. That is, one which without benefit of even visits to India (no Transcendentalist went till at least 1883)—and based mainly on the scriptures of India.

only to elucidate and document the *tangible* helps which came from India.

Now, what is this picture we get from Christy? Like Emerson and friends, he does not attempt to define 'Transcendentalism'<sup>29</sup>: none of them were system-makers—much less sect-makers—and in his closely-woven conclusion, Christy stresses 'mysticism ... religious instinct ... a peculiarly blended religious and philosophical approach to life.' (cf. footnote 19 and related text). He continues (pages 267-8) to outline that 'blending' to include many seeming contradictions, 'the contradiction of monism and dualism ... the fruit of the mystical temperament ... metaphysical thinking ... an unusual dash of the urbane .... Primarily neither a body ... of truths, but a "technique whereby truth may be discovered"'. Further, quoting Emerson: 'I have very good grounds for being a Unitarian and a Trinitarian too. I need not nibble forever at one loaf, but eat it and thank God for it, and earn another.' Our readers will be reminded of Sri Rāmakrishna's parable of the cow who gobbles all sorts of food, as giving the richest milk! And Christy continues (in startling parallel of Vivekananda's ideal): 'In the capacious natures of Emerson, Thoreau and Alcott, there was room for the expansion and alertness of the West as well as the concentration and serenity of the East ..' But Christy gravely warns not to imagine any similarity between this Truth-based Eclecticism and the many Oriental 'cults' which have lately 'invaded America'. Here Christy refers to Wendel Thomas' *Hinduism Invades America*. (cf. footnote no. 14) Thomas, after giving a fine collection of data on such cults gives a vivid description of the Rāmakrishna Mission and puts it far beyond all 'cults'.

29. Nor does Carl Jackson (op. cit. cf. footnote 13) or other obvious source-book.

We may also mention that Jacob Needleman, contemporary American psychologist writes of the Ramakrishna Movement in his book *The New Religions* :

When considering the Indian influence in America, a special place must be reserved to the Vedanta Societies throughout the country. Historically, Vedanta Society was the first Eastern religious tradition that took root on our soil, having been brought here late in the 19th century by Swami Vivekananda, the chief disciple of the great Indian Master, Sri Ramakrishna. Intellectually, the influence of this form of Vedanta has been enormous. It was because of the *American Vedantists* numbering some of the best minds of our time that the East was first taken seriously here, and though, when compared to more recent movements, it now seems sedate, its activities constitute a very wide and solidly based spiritual discipline ..

. Vedanta Society has been with us for sometime, and has more or less blended with the foliage of the American culture<sup>30</sup>

Christy's warning of 'cult' is indeed needed ; it reminds us, as often throughout this book, of Vivekananda's Herculean efforts to assimilate the 'best of the West with the best of the East'—vast breadth with tremendous intensity—so that man can 'put his whole soul upon that one point of love' and yet be 'unattached'.<sup>31</sup> And it was one of the many strong points of our Transcendentalists, that despite their 'nibbling' tendencies, which Vivekananda often scolded, they remained notably free from '... the vagaries of modern Orientally inspired prophets ... contemplating the navel in sumptuously upholstered ... salons under the guidance of a tutor who will return home a veritable Croesus, or the attendants at lectures for the disconsolate and mentally unemployed ....'<sup>32</sup>

30. Jacob Needleman, *The New Religions* (New York: Garden City Doubleday and Co., 1970) p. 213 and p. 8.

31. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (1976) vol. 2, p. 4.

32. Christy, op. cit., p. 269.

And here we come back to the question of 'roots'. Our Concord stalwarts seemed to have lost their roots in any form of Christianity and could hardly claim tangible 'roots' in a distant land none of them ever saw.<sup>33</sup>

But it is by now clear that they did retain vital roots in the real religion of Jesus, and especially the teachings and realizations of Jonathan Edwards, 'the greatest of the Puritans'. In an era when religious cults, 'Christian communes', 'Revivals', 'Camp Meetings', etc. were rising and most of them rotting fast<sup>34</sup>, the entire Transcendentalist group remained high above all serious criticism as to moral standards, and devotion to Truth alone. As a distinguished critic<sup>35</sup> who often referred to Emerson as bigoted, dogmatic, inexperienced, etc. puts it : 'he would find no difficulty in entering any kingdom of heaven ...' We have outlined<sup>36</sup> Thoreau's clear record—amidst the bitterest of criticisms earned by his perhaps over-zealous criticisms of others, none ever dared deny his purity, chastity,

33. It does seem peculiar that the Britishers, who did much to spread Indian culture and religious ideas (as individuals, usually in the face of opposition from the Empire officials) never, before 1893 at least, produced any such Group as the Concord one, i.e. none which stressed practice, self-discipline, etc. on Hindu lines. There are reasons for this; space forbids discussion here.

34. Cf. Gilber Seldes, *The Stammering Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1928 and 1965)—a fine study of these religious phenomena; which has little except praise for the Concord group, incidentally a deep appreciation for the lasting effects of Jonathan Edwards and the great Puritans, on the Transcendentalists. And no criticism for the various other groups sharing genuine Hindu teachings.

35. Charles Eliot Norton (in Christy, op. cit., pp. 119-20) with much appreciative criticism here added, as to Emerson's fitness for 'kingdom of heaven'.

36. See footnote no. 21 (our 'Profiles in Greatness').

or truthfulness, etc. And after three years of reading through major source-books, we have yet to find any significant mention of deviations from the straight and narrow path among others of the Group.

But see now, how close to home we're coming! Is not this the position of most of us, the newly-come Vedantists, whose view of 'Christianity' had become so dim—largely made up of dogmatic, refurbished Sunday lectures, 'Sunday-School' picnics, mass-singing of 'hymns' which appeal more to the feet than the head ... and all for a Christ who they say was really human, humble, long-suffering but, long since got free passage to 'Heaven' where we all are busy bowing down to Him. Yet who among us could escape the wonderful impact of His words—as Rolland said of Vivekananda's, 'like electric shocks'—if and when we hear or read them without all these overlays? Can we not feel the life flowing back into our roots? And how much more when we begin to assimilate Vivekananda's and Ramakrishna's assurance that He *was* God? But these Concord folk seem to have clung to the heart of Jesus' teachings, boldly discarding the nonessentials, especially the eschatology (eternal flames for many!), and doctrines such as Original Sin, Salvation by Faith (e.g. in the Blood of the Lamb), etc. In short, we conclude, that they discarded most of the metaphysics and kept the psychology, (the virtues, the disciplines, the Path).

This distinction seems basic; and Christy frequently alludes to it. One may recall our stress on 'a technique whereby truth may be discovered' (cf. footnote 30 and related text). Further, in describing Emerson's eclectic use of texts from the Orient (page 73) Christy writes: 'He turned to them as a religious psychologist, not as a metaphysician ...' Again (p. 114) quoting Emerson (in a passage to us suggestive of Vivekananda): 'The problem

of restoring to the world, original and eternal beauty is solved by the redemption of the soul. The ruin or blank that we see when we look at Nature is in our own eye ... is because man is disunited with himself.'

Christy was so impressed with this that he again quotes it when summarizing his section on Emerson's debt to Vedanta (p. 123); and continues, 'The veil of Maya must be pierced. Men must be shown that they are one ...' Obviously this is a task for the highest psychology.

Much more could be added as to Christy's handling of the importance of psychology; but when combined with his insight into the 'Transcendentalists' basic mysticism, their eclectic breadth and roots in the Puritan virtues, we begin to glimpse his achievement: he writes as a balanced, widely-read scholar who, at so young an age, had come to love and appreciate almost the entire range of Hindu thought. And his later works show that he grew to similar appreciation of the thought of all humanity.<sup>37</sup>

We have noted that, like most authors, Christy did not try to define 'Transcendentalism'; again, being concerned with only three of the great Transcendentalists, he makes only passing references to the 'Group' in and around Concord. We have called them 'the most remarkable outcropping ...' simply because we have so far come across none to compare with them.

37. His later works include: *The Asian Legacy and American Life* and (with Henry W. Wells), *World Literature: An Anthology of Human Experience*. Death took him in 1946 (aged 47); but he had worked steadily and carefully, while planning 'clearly and audaciously' towards more and more comprehensive studies of the human mind at its best. Several of those plans were well carried out by others. (Based on data supplied by Dr. Carl T. Jackson. Cf. footnote 13).

Christy, not being a 'Vedantist'<sup>38</sup> could scarcely have reason to make such comparisons; but from start to finish he helps buttress the fact.<sup>39</sup>

Further, he routinely refers to the 'friends' among this group in Concord; and from all sides come evidences of the warmth of this friendship. As we have noted that like Emerson, most, if not all, of the group would find ready access to 'any kingdom of Heaven', in the highest sense of the word. Of course Emerson—who seems to have made nothing *but* friends—may at times *seem* bit stiff and moralistic; but never the 'prickly' Thoreau or the endlessly spend-thrift, helpful, childlike enthusiast, Alcott.

We may add a little-known detail on which we stumbled last summer during a memorable visit to the shrines at Concord. Having chanced on the fact that none of Thoreau's brothers and sisters ever left their parents' home,<sup>40</sup> we asked the head librarian of the Concord Library if this was literally true. She at once said: 'Certainly; and don't think this was a rarity! Concord is really a family-town'. Our readers will of course be reminded of the Indian 'joint-family' tradition. And in this light, the entire Transcendentalist group does bear some resemblance to a big 'family'. Not

only are there few attempts to define it; even *Encyclopedia Britannica* mentions it only casually as 'the Transcendentalist Club, founded in Boston in 1836.' (Another nice coincidence with Sri Ramakrishna's advent!). But we hear of the 'officers'—although Emerson seems accepted as its guiding spirit; no 'platform', although several of the group were very active in public-reform movements. And, best and rarest of all, we hear of no serious quarrels or splits.<sup>41</sup>

And here we come back to our stress on 'religious psychology'. It is simply another way of describing the difference between 'Orient' and 'the West'—inner versus outer, etc. Ramakrishna was never tired of repeating, 'bondage and liberation is of the mind alone'. Vivekananda likewise summarized:<sup>42</sup> 'Psychology, they all (Hindu sages) take for granted, is a perfect science... All the fight has been regarding philosophy—the nature of the soul and all that.' Even more practically he quoted Jesus' beatitude: "'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.'" In that one sentence is the gist of all religions... it could save the world, were all the other scriptures lost.<sup>43</sup> And, clearly, becoming 'pure in heart' is wholly within the field of psychology!

On this point, our three Transcendentalists were unusually close. They loved differences, even self-contradictions. (We are reminded of Emerson's famous 'A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds'.); but the above-mentioned un-structured nature of their Group reflects their firm bent towards improving—purifying, strengthening—individuals, as against political or missionary or other pressure-group concern. On this point, again, their biographers, up till Christy, have been lamentable vague: some indeed amuse themselves by futile

38. Born in China, of Christian missionary parents, he seems to have had great breadth of vision from the start

39. Eg Half of his careful conclusions detail the influence of Thoreau on Gandhi, plus tributes of Indian leaders to Emerson. See also footnote 45. Of course, one must remember that the Theosophists—specially Col Olcott and Annie Besant, received even more praise from Indians; but this was mainly for socio-political help and uplift-work. Our readers need no reminders as to certain (non-Vedantic) peculiarities in their philosophy!

40. Nor ever married, though Henry and a brother both courted a fine lady, who had to refuse both in view of her orthodox Puritan background. (The Thoreaus were a bit radical!) Cf our 'Profile' on Thoreau (footnote 21 above)

41. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*.

42. *Ibid*

psycho-analytic attempts, e.g. to 'explain' Thoreau's life-long celibacy, or Emerson's insistence on 'turning his eyes towards the bright', the 'optimistic' side of things.<sup>43</sup> Yet Christy, as throughout, sets these peculiarities in firm religious context. In fact, the more peculiar they seem to Westerners, the more firmly he shows their Oriental rationale!

This 'optimistic' attitude of Emerson and his friends has often been attacked as 'Ivory Tower' or at least 'Rōmanticist'; but Christy as usual takes it to the highest level (pp. 113 ff.)—'the origin of sin and evil'—i.e. the 'problem of Evil' in philosophy. After turning back the many barbs and gibes from foes and friends, Christy summarizes:

All Emerson's Hindu-like premises converge to explain his optimism. He saw evil and he suffered pain, but they could not touch him. His faith in the reality of the ideal world was so fundamental that even the loss of a bride and his first-born in a brief time left no deep scar. When he could thus rise above the cruellest evils it was no blindness to pain and suffering. His optimism is a most persistent type of therapeutics.<sup>44</sup>

Thus we are led back to Emerson's 'technique whereby truth may be discovered ...' (p. 268). By now it is clear that Christy's tendency is to seek how, and

how much, 'the Orient had *changed the lives* of the Transcendentalists. In our 'Profile' of Thoreau (footnote 21) we relied heavily on Christy in documenting Thoreau's thoroughgoing *practice* of whatever he came to believe. By contrast, Emerson, under whom Thoreau 'put foundations' of practice, may have seemed a bit theoretical and literary. But Christy repeatedly stresses Emerson's zeal for the disciplines of purification. In Ramakrishna's terms, he could have called it a zeal for 'God realization'.<sup>45</sup> So with most, if not all, the leading Transcendentalists having no external 'props' to restrict them (creeds, rituals, missionarizing etc.) They were essentially a group of companions in *sadhana*!<sup>46</sup>

But now we're getting *really* close to home. The further one learns about this remarkable group, the more they begin to appear like spiritual brothers and sisters in our struggles for attaining perfection. And all this they did without depending on external helps like a Church or a teacher. Hence all our efforts in trying to harmonize our Yankee background<sup>47</sup> with the various

45. Space precludes documenting this personal *practice* (not mere 'beliefs') further, now Vinay Lal (cf. footnote 44) adds much to what Christy gives; Christy's is still the best account 'in print', to our knowledge.

46. Of course, aside from Thoreau, the others rarely seem to have engaged in any of India's outer devotional or 'Yoga' practices. But one cannot any longer doubt that they were in many ways Jñāna-yogis and/or Karma-yogis!

47. Remember: peaceful Concord had been the site of the 'shot heard round the world' (Emerson's famous phrase) which initiated the American Revolution. And Thoreau was a fearless devotee of John Brown—the most violent of the Abolitionists. Perry Miller (as quoted in our 'Profile', cf. footnote 21) well calls this inner struggle between Eastern and Western traditions, the 'Romantic Irony'—and assumes there is no real solution; but Christy clearly outlines problem *and* solution.

43. Cf. Christy, *op. cit.*, p. 118, etc.

44. Christy, *op. cit.*, p. 121. Here, Christy may have missed a few important data. Sri Vinay Lal, a graduate student at the University of Chicago, has done a brilliant study on 'Emerson and India' (Thesis for 'M.A.' at Johns Hopkins University, 1982) documenting especially this question of Emerson's (plus most Transcendentalists') 'optimism'. Emerson lost not only 'bride and first-born', but two well-loved brothers. And all these suggestions as to 'Ivory Tower', and 'looking above' evil, Sri Lal shows as integral parts of Emerson's Vedantic trend. Even in Hindu classic drama there simply *cannot* be a permanent tragedy! Sri Lal has been of great help with advice on the present report; his further studies are worth watching!

Eastern traditions, now seem mild in comparison with the Transcendentalists' inner torments and transports in the absence of any guidance except from the sacred books and God Himself.

Thus Christy stands as both pioneer and permanent map-maker or guide<sup>48</sup> for us,

48. Particularly in regard to *sadhana*. None of our sources before Christy—and few if any since him until Carl Jackson shows more than casual mention of this impact of Orient on men's lives. Frederick Carpenter (cf. footnote 2) seems

'the American Vedantins'. So far, none has done better the task he took on, the task of bringing the light from the East to our path. And those who have since broadened this field of study seem all to have built on his work.

intent on keeping all data in the realm of theory speculation or at best 'the fascination of' the Orient. One entire chapter is entitled 'Mine Asia'—simply a term of endearment Emerson used for his wife!

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

### *Terrorism Today*

Terrorism has evolved itself as the latest lethal game in the field of world politics. If guerrilla warfare showed us the first steps of clandestine attacks on enemies, today's terrorism has shown us how brutally, frustrated political anger or religious fanaticism can kill innocent persons.

In the early September of 1986 Pan American World Airways Flight 73 had touched down before dawn at Pakistan's Karachi International Airport. Eighteen hours later the 747 Jumbo jet still stood on the tarmac, but by then at least 17 of the plane's estimated 400 passengers and crew members were dead. About 125 were injured, some critically. All these were victims of a hijacking-drama.

Terrorist attacks have plagued the world's airlines for more than 15 years. The hijacking in 1985 of TWA Flight 847 to Beirut, lasted 17 days. Fortunately it resulted in the death of only one passenger.

A group of radical Lebanese Shiites in June 1985 commandeered another aircraft after it had departed from Athens. Of the original 153 passengers and crew aboard one person was killed.

Four Palestinians, armed with Soviet-made submachine-guns and hand grenades, in October 1985 seized the Mediterranean cruise liner with more than 499 passengers and crew aboard. One passenger was murdered in the attack.

In July 1983 a Jumbo jet bound from Shiraz

in southwestern Iran to Tehran was hijacked with 386 passengers aboard by six rebellious Iranians. No passengers were harmed.

In December 1985, three Arab terrorists diverted a Boeing 737 to Malta. After a commando raid 58 of the 79 hostages left on the plane died. More than 40 were killed by burns or smoke inhalation from the fires that commando attack ignited, and another eight by bombs the hijackers threw. Commando operation in most cases miserably failed.

The most successful commando raid was staged in 1977, when West German forces rescued 86 passengers and crew from a Lufthansa jet that had been diverted by hijackers to Mogadishu, Somalia. No commandos or hostages were killed in the attack.

Dr. David Hubbard, an American consultant on terrorism says, 'The record shows that when commandos storm aircraft the number of people killed increases. If the terrorists don't kill them, the security forces do.'

In an address at Harvard University, American Secretary of State, George Shultz described such terrorism as a new form of 'vanquished barbarisms of our time.'

Recent terrorist killings in Punjab—between 500 and 700 under the current political regime—have belied the faintest hope of the greatest optimists. These gruesome killings are the spine-chilling headlines of Indian dailies for the last one year. Increasingly these killings are becom-

ing bolder, and more brutal. In a village near Amritsar, the three sons of a family were gunned down in cold blood. The teenage college-going only son of Amritsar's Superintendent of Police was shot outside his classroom.

The savage terrorist killing of 24 bus passengers on November 30 last year in Bhagol Khurd, small village in Punjab's Hoshiarpur district, sent a shock-wave of fear and resentment in the entire nation. Frightened onlookers had stood dumbfounded just 200 yards away as three revolvers and a stengun spewed death inside the bus. The four killers escaped on scooters.

As shooting and arrests of suspects went up so did terrorist killings.

Where is the end of the road? Most of these terrorist attacks either on land or in airways are backed by a sinister zeal of religious fundamentalism. In such cases of outrageous

fanaticism inspired by a theological dogmatism, 'God is a monster' and 'Religious leaders must be violent minded', as historian Toynbee has shown in his book *A Historian's Approach to Religion*. 'Religious conflict', he says, 'is a public nuisance which easily becomes a public danger'. Any country or nation which wishes to gain advantage by encouraging terrorists over others is only waiting for the nemesis of history. The moral order in Shakespeare's universe spared neither Macbeth nor Iago. When shall we take the lesson from Sri Ramakrishna—'As many faiths, so many paths'? But before entering into any training in religious pluralism, it is imperative at this moment that heads of the states should combine together and put an 'international pressure' on factors 'political or religious', that breed terrorism which kills both good and bad alike with a blind stupidity of Schopenhauer's will.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

BEGIN THE DAY WITH GOD. Pp 167 Rs 20.  
I HAVE NEED OF YOU Pp 117. Rs 60  
LIFE AFTER DEATH Pp 96 Rs 10

All the above books by J. P. VASWANI Published by Gita Publishing House, 10, Sadhu Vaswani Path Poona 411 011, Maharashtra

Many of the readers of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* may remember a Sindhi youth by name Hirananda whom Sri Ramakrishna loved dearly and held in high regard. The Master's intuition was infallible and, although Sadhu Hirananda died prematurely he influenced a number of young people in Sind, the foremost of whom was Sadhu T. L. Vaswani. After a brilliant academic and teaching career, Sadhu T. L. Vaswani renounced the world and dedicated his life to spreading the message of divine love and purity and to the education of girls. He was undoubtedly one of the leading spiritual lights of India during the middle of this century. After his passing away his mantle of spiritual leadership fell on his worthy disciple and nephew Dada J. P. Vaswani. A charismatic, gentle personality who has built his life on the bedrock of purity and discipline, Dada Vaswani has, like his mentor, dedicated his life to the service of the poor and the suffering. For more than a decade

he has been constantly touring in different parts of India and the world spreading the message of love, peace and devotion.

The first book *Begin the Day with God* is a collection of Dada J. P. Vaswani's mature reflections and exhortations arranged in the form of a diary. Though of the nature of the spontaneous outpourings of his heart, these thoughts provide valuable insights into the spiritual aspects of life.

The second book *I have Need of You* is a collection of poems on spiritual themes which have a delightful naivete and charm. They reveal the depth of devotion and purity of Dada J. P. Vaswani. Both the books are printed beautifully and should serve as ideal gifts, especially for young people.

In the last book *Life after Death* Dada J. P. Vaswani presents with remarkable clarity certain vital pieces of information which most people would find very helpful in orientating themselves to life after death. The author shows that death is a door to a richer, fuller, more beautiful life. This is an interesting presentation of both modern ideas on post-mortem survival and traditional ideas on the immortality of the soul.



**BHAGAVAD GITA: TRANS. AND COMM.**  
By R. GOTSCHALK. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 009. 1985. Pp xvi + 245 Rs 100/-

The *Bhagavadgītā* is one of the very few ancient texts that have been treated as 'contemporary'. The present form of the text is found in the commentary of Samkara (788-820 A.D.), and this is the earliest available commentary on the poem. Various *ācāryas* and scholars have used the *Gītā* to expound their own philosophical doctrines through their comments and notes on it. In the present-century India the commentaries of Tilak and Gandhi helped to awaken faith and power in the minds of the people who had been under the yoke of foreign rule.

Scholars in other countries have also paid rich tributes to the *Gītā*. Several of them have devoted major parts of their life to the study and understanding of this work. Garbe, Otto, Edgerton, Zaehner and others have made notable contribution to the exposition of the message of the *Gītā*.

The work under review is a fresh English translation of the poem with a commentary (chapter-wise) by Dr. Richard Gotschalk who has taught courses on the text for many years in the Pennsylvania State University, USA. His translation has some variations from those provided by Radhakrishnan, Zaehner and others. The reason for a fresh translation is the translator's conviction that in a translation the accuracy of meaning provided by the linguistic and literary elements of the poem should not be sacrificed for the sake of interpretation. Dr. Gotschalk has sought accurate expression of the meaning and thought of Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna dialogue. He has also paid special attention to the dramatic elements, right down to the epithets used of each other by the speakers. As no translation can avoid being also interpretative, the present translator has appended a commentary in order to make explicit what remains involved in the translation. What is articulated most centrally in the text (as the revelation in the eleventh chapter suggests) is Time in its bearing upon human life as an active affair, an affair of commitment to activity in which there is something at stake.

According to Dr. Gotschalk, the dialogical whole of the *Gītā* is rooted in the concrete situation narrated by Sañjaya to King Dhṛitarāstra. The main dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna upholds, in a dramatic way, the perennial problems of man's station in life and its duties.

The thoughtful articulation of the problem of human existence can always provide appropriate beginning-points in a historical recall within which the crisis of the present-day world can be discussed and discerned. The author also affirms that the teaching of the *Gītā*, like that of the epic *Mahābhārata*, is an inclusive one, and Hindus belonging to various sects find most of their basic beliefs acknowledged and affirmed by the statements of the text.

Dr. Gotschalk has provided exhaustive notes to explicate the various terms and concepts in the text. The detailed index of themes and ideas, epithets and subjects is very helpful to the student of the *Gītā*.

The work is a masterly attempt to study the text in minutest detail. It is to be regarded as a mile-stone in the history of *Gītā* studies.

DR. S. P. DUFFY  
Reader in Philosophy  
Ram Durgavati University  
Jabalpur

## BENGALI

**VIVEKANANDA SISYA SARAT CHANDRER JIVANI O RACHANAVALI** (Bengali) Published by Brahmapada Chakravarty, 15/1 Surya Sen Street, Calcutta 700 012. Available at Vivekananda Society, 151 Vivekananda Road, Calcutta 700 006. 1984. Pp ix + 290 Rs 20.

Sri Sarat Chandra Chakravarty was one of the illustrious lay disciples of Swami Vivekananda. His name is familiar to many mainly owing to his memorable compilation *Svāmī Sisya Samvada* (in Bengali) the English rendering of which appears in the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* under the title 'Conversations and Dialogues'. However, he authored several other works including a beautiful biography of Nag Mahashay and hymns, poems and essays which are not only rich in literary values but also filled with devotional fervour. There was a long-felt need to collect all these scattered writings into a single volume and also for an authentic biography of this beloved 'Disciple' of Swamiji. The book under review fulfils both these requirements.

The first 50 pages of the book contain a biographical sketch of Sri Sarat Chandra, written by no other than his fourth son, Prof. Dr. Shivapada Chakravarty, Head of the Department of Philosophy, Ravindra Bharati University.

Although prior to this work another biography of Sarat Chandra had been published in Bengali entitled *Śrī Virekūnanda Śiṣya Sarat Chandra*, the present article contains many more incidents of his early life painstakingly collected by his youngest son Śrī Brahmapada Chakravarty. Besides being authentic, the biography is so well-written that it has earned the following compliments from the pen of Swami Niramayanandaji: 'It is indeed a formidable task for a son to write a biography of his father. However, the write-up is successful only because the author has been able to transcend all personal feelings and has been guided by factual details.'

The second part of the book, which covers about five-sixths of the entire volume, contains all the available writings of Śrī Sarat Chandra excluding his three books *Svāmi Śiṣya Samvada*, *Sadhu Nag Mahasava* and *Śrī Śrī Ramakrishna Pāncālī*. These compositions, most of which originally appeared in the *Udhodhan* between the first and the third decade of the present

century, have been classified into three main sections viz. Hymns, Poems and Prose. There are 24 hymns (in Sanskrit) and 13 songs mainly on Śrī Ramakrishna and Swami. These are followed by 19 poems and 20 prose-pieces. All the Sanskrit hymns have been provided with Bengali renderings so as to make them understandable to larger number of readers. The two Sanskrit letters of Swami written to Sarat Chandra have been included in the Appendix along with their Bengali translations. We hope the typographical errors will be eliminated in the next edition.

These compositions of Sarat Chandra reveal his extraordinary poetic talents, deep scriptural knowledge and, above all, sincere devotion to his Guru. While we wish a large circulation for the book, we feel an English translation of the entire volume will be warmly received by a wider public.

SWAMI MEKINATHANANDA  
Belur Math

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVA PRATISHTHAN CALCUTTA

REPORT FOR APRIL 1984 TO MARCH 1985

Begun in 1932 as a small antenatal and postnatal clinic with domiciliary maternity service and known then as the Ramakrishna Mission Shushrūngal Pratishthan, the Seva Pratishthan is now a mammoth complex serving the public through the following four wings.

**General Hospital.** The total number of beds in the hospital was 550 and it had the following departments: General Medicine, General Surgery, Obstetrics, Gynaecology, Paediatric Medicine, Paediatric Surgery, Orthopaedics, Urology, Ophthalmology, ENT Surgery, Dentistry and Dermatology. It has also special clinics for Anaesthesiology, Heart, Diabetes, Neurology, Nephrology, Psychiatry, Hearing and Speech Therapy, Physiotherapy, Post-partum (Family Welfare), Club-Foot, Glaucoma, Contact Lens, Immunization and Well Baby. The special needs of the departments are met by the departments of Radiology and Radiotherapy, Blood Bank, Infusion production, Pathology, Biochemistry,

Human Genetics. The Community Health Service Unit conducts clinics for both urban and rural patients.

All the departments are well equipped. Worth mentioning are the hospital's nine air-conditioned Operation Theatres, seven X-ray Plants, a Deep X-ray Unit, two Image Intensifiers, six Cardiac Monitors, two Dialysis, five E.C.G. Machines, four Temporary Pace Makers, one Pacing System Analyser, one Defibrillator, four Baby Incubators, an Oxygen Tent, a Bird Mark 8 Respirator, a Cardioscope, an E.M.G. Machine, an E.E.G. Machine and two Zeiss Surgery Microscopes. It has also an electrically operated hospital laundry.

The total number of patients treated in the departments during the year was, indoor, 18,888 (excluding 5,274 live births), outdoor, 2,14,584 (new cases) and 1,46,012 (old cases). The total number of operations conducted was 8,675. In the outdoor all patients were given free consultation facilities and a large number of them also got free treatment. In the indoor departments free and partly free treatment was given to 20.13% and 16.39% of the cases respectively.

**School of Nursing** The school has a capacity to train 300 students. An entrant to the General Nursing-Midwifery Course lasting three years and six months is required to be a higher secondary school graduate between 17 and 28 years of age. Each student is given a stipend. After a course of three months an examination is held and successful candidates take part in an impressive 'Seva-Vrata Initiation' (capping ceremony) at which they receive their nursing caps and take vows of lifelong dedicated service to the sick and the suffering. All the 25 and 36 students who appeared in the final examinations in 1984 and 1985 respectively passed.

The Multipurpose Health Workers' course (revised Auxiliary Nursing Midwifery course) of 18 months duration requires candidates seeking admission to it to be in the age group of 17-25 and to have passed the Madhyamik or an equivalent examination. The procedure of selection is the same as in the general nursing course and each student is given a stipend. All the 54 students who appeared in the final examination in November 1984 passed.

The total number of students in the School of Nursing in the year was 161.

**Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences.** This service-oriented institute is recognized by the University of Calcutta as a unit of the University College of Medicine for postgraduate training and research in medicine. It is recognized also by the Indian Council of Medical Research as a research centre and by the Medical Council of India for compulsory rotatory training of fresh medical graduates, for postgraduate degree courses and for housemanship training. The courses in Child Health (DCH), Gynaecology and Obstetrics (DGO), Ophthalmology (DO) and Oto-Rhino-Laryngology (DLO): during the year under review, 23 students were on the rolls—8 for DCH, 7 for DGO, 4 for DO and 4 for DLO.

During 1984-85 seven doctors were doing their dissertation for postgraduate degrees—2 for MD in Gynaecology, 2 for MS in General Surgery, 1 for MD in Paediatrics, and 2 for MD in General Medicine. Moreover, senior doctors in various departments also conduct

research in different branches of medical science and the results are published in the Institute's half-yearly journal.

**Community Health Service** As a part of the nursing training course, an area near the Seva Pratishthan and another near Sarisha in the 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, were selected for the training of nursing students. Besides collection of necessary data from these areas, the people there were given free immunization, hospital facilities and domiciliary treatment including antenatal and postnatal care to the new and expectant mothers, and regular health check-up of local school children.

The medical mobile unit attached to the Community Health Service covered 28 villages and 12 semi-urban areas with a population 46,000 in its rounds twice a week providing free treatment to some 450 patients each day, bringing the critically ill to the main hospital when necessary. It served 84,575 patients during 1984-85.

**Present needs.** To meet the increasing demands of the public and to render more efficient service to the patients, the Institution has undertaken the following essential development projects: (1) a multistoreyed building for Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences, (2) a Paediatric hospital with 150 beds, an emergency-ward of 20 beds, a post-operative ward of 10 beds; a psychiatric ward of 15 beds, a Plastic Surgery-cum-Burn Unit of 15 beds, a Physiotherapy department, and a building for the School of Nursing with a playground and staff quarters, (3) Endowment for the maintenance of a bed for the whole year Rs. 2,00,000, for six months Rs. 1,00,000 and for three months Rs. 50,000. Anyone may create an endowment for a bed in his or her name by contributing the above amount.

The generous public are requested to donate liberally to help the Institution meet the above needs. Donations, which are exempt from Income Tax, may be sent as money orders, a/c payee cheques or bank drafts in the name of 'Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan' to the Secretary, at 99, Sarat Bose Road, Calcutta 700 026.

'He who knows the Supreme attains the highest.'—Tait Upa II.1.1

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MADRAS, APRIL 1897

Published Monthly

### Para Bhakti or Wisdom

(Editorial)

We have seen what *Apara-bhakti* or *Saguna* worship is. It is but a step and a very necessary one towards the highest form of worship—absorption into the deity—in which alone can the mind find its final resting place. 'God', says the Yoga Vasishta, 'is neither Vishnu alone, nor Siva alone, nor any embodied being, for all bodies are merely compounds of the five elements, nor is God the mind; but He is the Gnana, the Self, beginningless and endless. Can He be the little things, body, mind and the like?' As Brahmaghana is illimitable, actionless and without either beginning or end, such *gnana* alone is true and fit to be attained. But in the case of the ignorant devoid of wisdom, worship of forms alone is ordained to be the best. Just as wayfarers when they are unable to travel a long distance are told that their destination is but a call distant in order not to let their spirits droop, so persons devoid of wisdom are told to worship diverse forms at first though the wise say that they will not reach the Self merely through the worship of these various forms (*Saguna* worship).

'Strong limbs may dare the rugged road which storms,

Soaring and perilous, the mountain's breast,

The weak must wind from slower ledge to ledge.

With many a place of rest'

This will explain how Kabirdas one of the greatest of modern saints though by birth a Muhammadan and a worshipper of the abstract formless Alla, was initiated into the details of *Saguna* worship by God Himself as the story goes. Of course when one stops with *Vachakamkavya*, i.e., merely talking about religion, it matters not whether God is *Saguna*, with form, or *Nirguna*, without form but, when he enters into practical realization, it is very essential that the conception one has, should not be too far above his mental aptitude and capacity.

### Gnana Yoga

(Class Lectures Delivered in America)

by

Swami Vivekananda

### No. 1 SADHANAS OR PREPARATION

Do you remember the story of Solon and Croesus? The king said to the great sage that Asia Minor was a very happy place. And the sage asked him 'Who is the happiest man; I have not seen any one very happy?' 'Nonsense', said Croesus, 'I am the happiest man in the world' 'Wait, sir, till the end of your life, don't be in a hurry', replied the sage and went away. In course of time that king was conquered by the Persians, and they ordered him to be burnt alive, the funeral pyre was prepared and when poor Croesus saw it, he cried aloud 'Solon! Solon!' On being asked to whom he referred, he told his story and the Persian Emperor was kind enough to forgive him.

Such is the life story of each one of us, such is the tremendous power of nature over us. It repeatedly kicks us away, but still we pursue it with feverish excitement. We are always hoping against hope; this hope, this chimera maddens us, we are always hoping for happiness.

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# বিশ্বচেতনায় শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ

নানা দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণের দিবা জীবন ও বাণীর পর্যালোচনা। বিশিষ্ট সন্ন্যাসী, সাহিত্যিক ও দেশ-বিদেশের গবেষকবৃন্দের মননশীল রচনাসমৃদ্ধ অনবদ্য গ্রন্থ। শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ সম্পর্কে এ-জাতীয় গ্রন্থ ইতিপূর্বে প্রকাশিত হয়নি।

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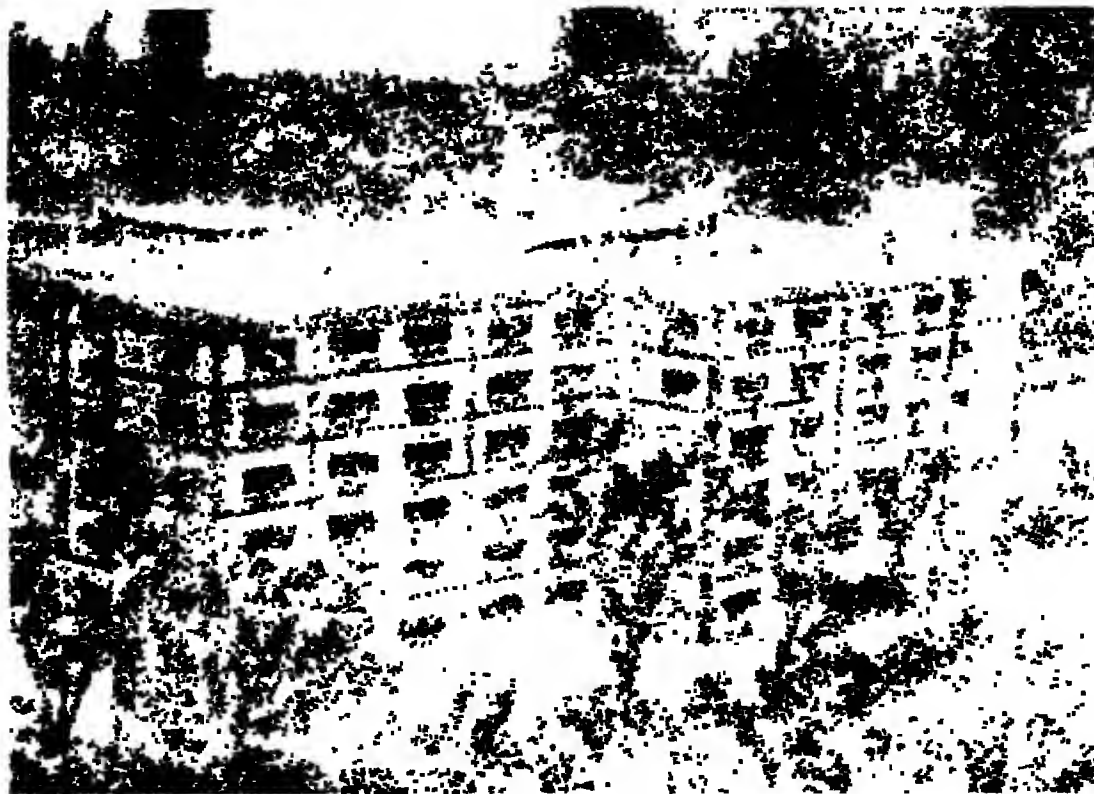
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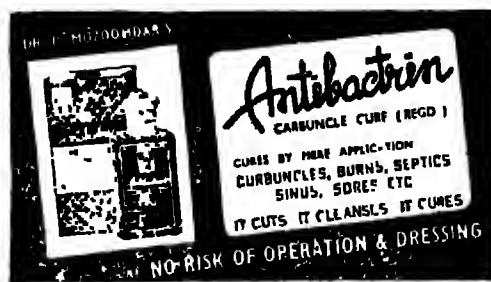
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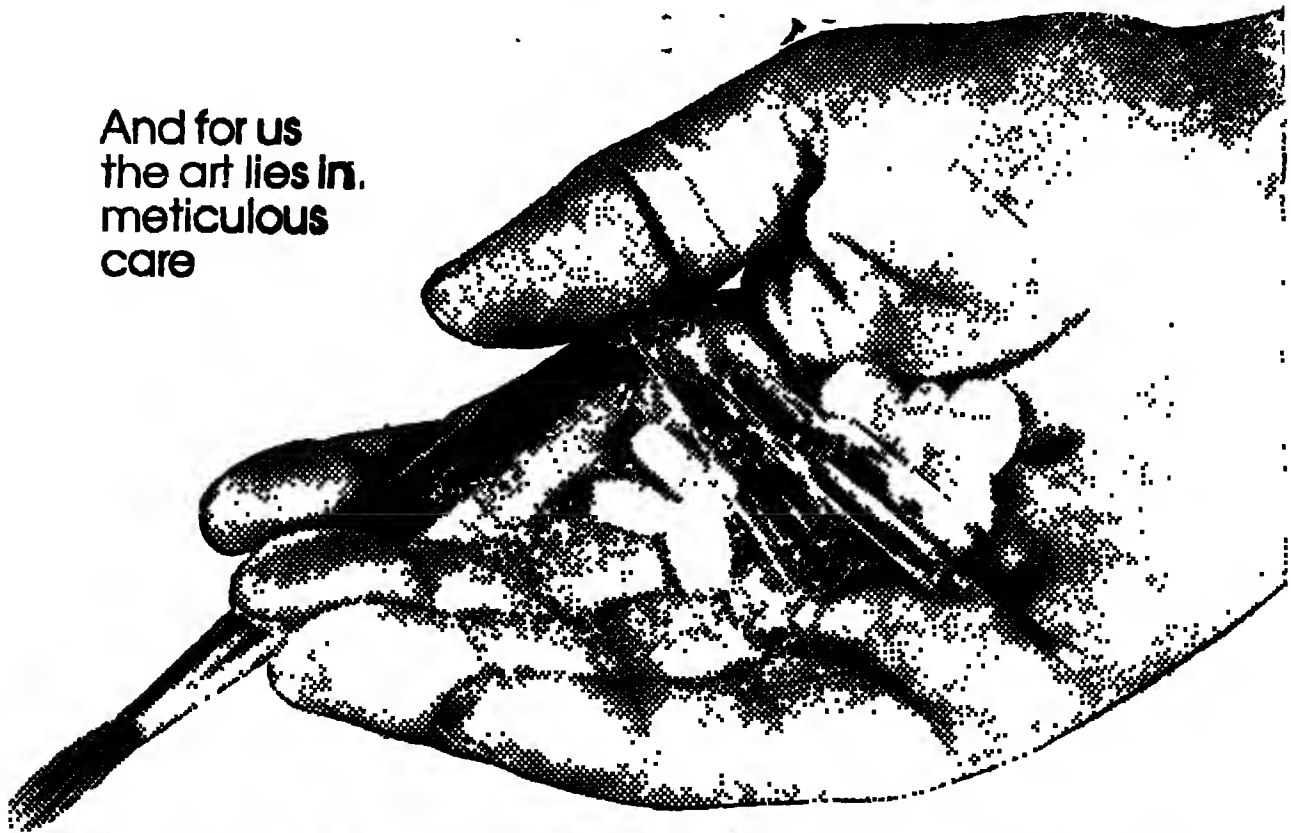
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प्रकाशक : रामकृष्ण मठ

(प्रकाशन विभाग)

धन्तोली, नागपुर-४४० ०१२

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Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

## ETERNAL VOICE OF INDIA

*Vidyayā vindate amṛtam*

'Immortality is attained through Self-knowledge'

Know that one Atman only, by whom the heaven, the earth and the sky, and the mind with all the *prāṇas* are interpenetrated. Give up all other (vain) talks. This is the bridge to Immortality.

Fools, wise in their own conceit, dwelling in the midst of ignorance, (yet) puffed up with vain knowledge, suffering again and again, wander about like the blind led by the blind.

The knots of his heart are cut, all doubts disappear and the effects of his karma are destroyed, when is realized that One who is both the transcendent and the immanent.

Verily the truthful alone succeed, not the untruthful. By truthfulness is spread the path of Devayāna by which repair the Ṛṣis, having all their desires satisfied, to that place where exists the supreme abode of the True.

This Atman is never attained by the weak, nor by the inattentive, nor even by improper austerity. The wise one who strives with all these means—his Atman enters into the world of Brahman.

Having attained It, the Ṛṣis become satisfied with the Knowledge, self-realized, tranquil and free from all desires.

Whatever world the man of purified mind wishes for in his mind, whatever desirable objects he desires, he wins all those worlds and all those desirable objects. Therefore those who want material prosperity should worship these men of Self-realization.

*Muṇḍaka Upanisad*

(2.2.5, 1.2.5, 2.2.8, 3.1.6, 3.2.4, 3.2.5, 3.1.10)



## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL seeks to establish the ancient Indian view—the reality outside is only a projection of our mind—from the standpoint of latest developments in modern physics.

ETHICAL TEACHINGS OF THE DHAMMAPADA is by Dr. Yoga Dhyan Ahuja, of the Metropolitan State College, Colorado, U.S.A. The article was originally presented as a paper at the American Academy of religion, Midwestern Regional Meeting at Chicago in 1972.

THE WAY OF THE HOLY MOTHER is a scholarly analysis on the life and teachings of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, especially her teaching on the need of abstaining from fault-finding in others. Its author Dr. M. Sivaramakrishna is a well-known writer and

scholar in English literature and a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. He is now the professor of English, Osmania University, Hyderabad.

Srimati Manjula M.A. (English) of the Ramakrishna Samiti, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, writes in her article SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: REFLECTIONS ON LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE on Swami Vivekananda's views on literature and language in a very scholarly and penetrating way.

Swami Tathagatananda, head of the Vedanta Centre, New York, dwells in the short article BARANAGORE MATH AND ITS IDEALISM on the historic importance of the earliest brotherhood of the mendicant Ramakrishnites which began exactly a century ago in 1886 in the dilapidated, ghost-ridden house at Baranagore, Calcutta.

## WE MAKE OUR OWN WORLD

(EDITORIAL)

Diogenes of Sinope, the Greek ascetic, lived on one single idea that the world is a dream. Plato called him 'Socrates gone mad'.<sup>1</sup> In the bright Sunlight of noon the dreamer would move with a lantern in order to find an honest man in a 'conventional' society. Story goes that during moments of extreme physical pain someone asked him, 'Diogenes, do you still call the world a dream?' With a biting repartee he was reported to have replied, 'Yes, it is a painful dream.' Poets, philosophers and saints in various civilizations and cultures have sometimes experienced this truth. Shakespeare's

celebrated lines at the end of *Tempest*, may be remembered, 'We are such stuff/As dreams are made on and our little life/Is rounded with a sleep.' The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* tells us that both the waking state and dream state of our life are ultimately illusory. These two states are mere creations of two levels of our ordinary consciousness. The highest level of our consciousness is the stage of *turiya*, when we cease to see the world of matter. We feel only one consciousness everywhere. Sri Ramakrishna used to tell a story. A farmer went to sleep and then began to dream. In dream he became a king and a father of seven beautiful princes. In the same dream all these sons died one after

1. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1967) p. 409.

the another. With a pain in his heart he finally woke up from this dream, only to find that his only son in real life was just dead. Puzzled, he sat motionless and still. When his wife remonstrated with him that he had no tears for this terrible loss, the farmer replied that he could not decide whom to mourn for, the seven princes of the dream or the one son of real life? Ramakrishna tells us that the farmer was a man of knowledge. He understood well that the waking state is ultimately as unreal as the dream.

### *The new world view of quantum physics*

The so-called men of science obviously refused to accept such strange philosophical ideas. From 17th century onwards the philosophy of Descartes, Newton and others had developed in the West the new scientific rationalism which accepted the world of matter as the final and an independently existing reality. Dr. Johnson, the father of the Age of Reason in England once kicked out a large stone in order to refute Berkley's idea that the world is composed not of matter but of ideas only. Ernst Mach, the teacher of Einstein, told the young disciple 'Science may be regarded as a minimal problem consisting of the completest presentation of facts with the least possible expenditure of thought.'<sup>2</sup> Arthur Eddington was one of those eminent physicists who welcomed the changing world view of modern physics. He wrote that Dr. Johnson 'ought to be aware that what Rutherford (the celebrated English physicist) has left us of the large stone is worth kicking.'<sup>3</sup> Today after the revolutionary discoveries by Einstein,

Bohr, Heisenberg, Schrodinger and others, the quest for the ultimate material staff of the universe has turned into a wild goose chase. As one physicist puts it:

Our conception of substance is only vivid so long as we do not face it. It begins to fade when we analyze it... the solid substance of things is another illusion. We have chased the solid substance from the continuous liquid to the atom, from the atom to the electron, and there we have lost it.<sup>4</sup>

Einstein, in fact, is the beginner of this new outlook in science. He established the relativity of all our knowledge. All things are in space. They have got three dimensions, length, breadth and height. Einstein added the new dimension of Time. Both time and space, according to Einstein, is fused into one continuum. And whatever is in space-time gives us only a 'relative' knowledge of the thing. Absolute knowledge is beyond all relative perceptions. And this relativity of all knowledge is based on the variations between observations. Bronowski writes: 'Relativity derives essentially from the philosophical analysis which insists that there is not a fact and an observer, but a joining of the two in an observation... that event and observer are not separable.'<sup>5</sup>

These new ideas surfaced more powerfully with Quantum physics. Quantum physics is that branch of physics which deals with sub-atomic particles like electrons and protons. Since these particles are emitted discontinuously in discrete packages (quantum) of energy, they are known as Quantum Particles. Heisenberg, in fact, was the beginner of this new trend of thought in Quantum physics. In the year 1927 Heisenberg discovered his Uncertainty Principle. According to this Uncertainty

2. Quoted in Edward O. Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Harvard University Press, 1978) p. 12.

3. Ken Wilber, *Spectrum of Consciousness* (Wheaton, Illinois: Third Quest Book Printing, Theosophical Publishing House, 1982) p. 38.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., p. 39.

Principle, a sub-atomic particle has no distinctive, objective reality. It is, as Talbot put it, 'Omnijective'—an inseparable combination of the subject of the scientist and the object observed. The dualism between mind and matter, the partition between the scientist and the object of experiment was demolished for ever after this discovery of Heisenberg. He declared that 'the common division of the world into subject and object, inner world and outer world, body and soul is no longer adequate and leads us into difficulties.'<sup>6</sup>

But now a more important question came to forefront. If reality is 'omnijective', which of the two components, subject and object, is primary? Does the object bring awareness in the subject or does the subjective consciousness lend reality to the external world? The doubting Thomas had the vision of a resurrected Christ. The question is, 'Did the resurrected Christ physically appear before him, or did Thomas' own consciousness see a resurrected Christ?' Austrian Nobel physicist Erwin Schrodinger's wave equation has answered this question once for all and has virtually pushed the world of science to accept the idea that Swami Vivekananda had given to the world nearly a century before, 'We make our own world.'

### *Schrodinger's wave equation*

How did the new physicists suddenly stumble on this truth? Until 1914 light was known to move only as waves. In 1914 Einstein proved that light moves also as a particle. He called this light particle 'photon'. Electron which moves round the nucleus was already known as a particle. Suddenly another nobel-physicist Louis de Broglie, in a surprisingly new way, proved that electrons also behave as waves. Erwin

Schrodinger worked on this wave nature of electron and discovered the celebrated Schrodinger's Wave Equation. This equation brought the correlation between electron as wave and electron as particle.

But the greatest surprise was in store. Schrodinger's wave equation, most unexpectedly, led to something strange that pushed the real world of the scientists to the verge of a dream. It is now a fascinating story, no less stranger than *Alice in Wonderland*.

In his book *Mysticism and New Physics*, Michael Talbot writes of this new findings which emerged out of Schrodinger's wave equation.

In certain circumstances Schrodinger's wave function predicted the behaviour of a given particle upto a point and then described two equally probable outcomes of the same particle. On paper as well as in observation *no reason* could be found for the particle's varying behaviour. The equation therefore seemed to have entered a schizophrenic state in which it could not decide which outcome to choose.<sup>7</sup>

Schrodinger's wave equation emerged as Ramakrishna's farmer who could not decide which sons to mourn for. But the strange behaviour of Schrodinger's particle did not stop there. Talbot explains this strange phenomenon:

Under certain circumstances the wave function will predict an infinite number of schizophrenia in which case its path (or Vector) in configuration space branches into four possible outcomes, eight possible outcomes, sixteen possible outcomes, ad infinitum.<sup>8</sup>

We have, by now, entered into a magic world of modern physics. In 1927, the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics advocated by Niels Bohr others, established that some type of detection by

7. Michael Talbot, *Mysticism and New Physics* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980) p 28.

8. Ibid., p. 31.

6. Ibid.

an observing system is required in order to allow the particle emerge into a physical reality. Otherwise the 'observed system' or the objective reality does not physically exist. But Schrodinger's wave equation suggests 'an endlessly proliferating number of possibilities for the observed system whether it is observed or not'. The strange nature of the Schrodinger's wave equation has been found true in many experiments. One of them is the strange phenomenon in physics, known as diagonally polarized light.<sup>9</sup> An experiment on this phenomenon again shows how Schrodinger's wave functions lead to the 'weird' conclusion that the external world is created by our mind. Light, as we have seen, moves both as waves and particles. Let us accept that in this experiment on the diagonally polarized light, light is moving only as waves. It may be remembered that light waves can move both horizontally and vertically.

Polarizers are a special kind of light filter. If a polarizer is kept vertically aligned in front of a light source, only vertical light waves can pass through it. Similarly horizontal light waves can pass through the polarizer only when we keep the polarizer horizontally inclined. Light with vertical waves gets arrested when there stands a horizontal polarizer in front of it. Similarly light with horizontal waves gets arrested where there is vertical polarizer in front of it. Now let us send a beam of light with horizontal waves through a horizontal polarizer. What happens? The light clearly passes through it. Next let us keep another polarizer in front of this horizontally inclined polarizer. This time the polarizer is vertically inclined. What happens? The light with horizontal wave

which passed through the horizontal polarizer, now gets arrested by the presence of the second vertical polarizer which stands now as a barrier to passage of this light.

Now let us take a third step. And this is the strangest step we are going to take! Let us now keep a third diagonal polarizer in between the vertical and the horizontal polarizer. And here comes the strange experience!! Light now passes through all these polarizers unhindered. A horizontally polarized light is essentially different from the diagonally polarized light or the vertically polarized light. How could the horizontal light now pass through the second and third barriers, when it failed earlier to pass through the second barrier? We may also put the question more simply. How could the horizontal light suddenly change itself into a diagonally polarized light and immediately after that again into a vertically polarized light? How can the same actor act as Othello and Iago in the same scene on the same stage? Yes, it is possible. Schrodinger's wave function already proved how the same wave can branch into different realities at the same time. Ramakrishna's farmer was simultaneously aware of the two experiences, one of the dream and the other of the waking state.

Schrodinger's wave equation, according to many physicists today, suggests something completely new. It represents a world of 'multi-dimensional reality'. Different particles, in Schrodinger's wave equation, acquire absolutely different dimensions. It is very difficult to conceive of such a situation. But at least mathematically this is what stands before us. Gary Zukav explains this phenomenon in his celebrated book, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*.

If the wave function represents possibilities associated with two different particles, then that

9. Gary Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters (An Overview of the New Physics)* (Flamingo edition) (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1984) pp. 279-284. ,

wave function exists in six dimensions, three for each particle. If the wave function represents the possibilities associated with twelve particles, then that wave function exists in thirty-six dimensions!<sup>10</sup>

It is impossible to visualize such a situation. Our experience of matter is limited to three dimensions. How is it possible for us to conceive of a particle which could be felt in many dimensions? None the less this is the mathematics of the situation. 'In short, the fact is that when we try to observe any subatomic particle or event, we reduce a multi-dimensional reality (and make it) compatible with our experience,' says Zukav.<sup>11</sup>

'Most physicists' writes Zukav, 'dismiss the wave functions of Schrodinger as purely mathematical constructions', as 'street fictions which represent nothing in the world of reality'. Unfortunately, this explanation leaves forever unanswered the question, 'How then, can the functions predict so accurately probabilities which can be verified through actual experience?' Gary Zukav brings out this philosophical aspect of this experiment on Polarizers in a very forceful and convincing words, 'Whenever we insert a diagonal polarizer between a horizontal polarizer and a vertical polarizer we see light where there was none before. Our eyes are ignorant of the fact that what they are seeing is "impossible". That is because experience does not follow the rules of classical logic. It follows the rules of Quantum logic.'<sup>12</sup> Zukav wonders, 'In fact how can functions predict *anything* when they are unrelated to physical reality?'<sup>13</sup> Yet, it is all true. Quantum physics helps us understand how

Hamlet saw the ghost of his father, while his mother or uncle failed to see it.

### *Schrodinger's cat*

This strange multi-dimensional nature of all subatomic phenomena (or particles) was explained by Schrodinger himself by means of the celebrated thought experiment known as *Schrodinger's cat*. Schrodinger suggested that we imagine a cat sealed in a box along with a special mechanical device. This device consists of a weak radioactive source and a detector of radioactive particles. The detector is connected with a bulb of poisoned gas. And the arrangement is such that if the particles emitted from the weak radioactive source is detected (by the detector), then the bulb will burst, the gas will come out and the cat will die. If the particle is not emitted (and therefore not detected) the bulb will not burst, the gas will not come out, and the cat will be alive. The detector is turned on only once for one minute; let us suppose that the probability that the radioactive source will emit a detectable particle during this minute is one out of two= $\frac{1}{2}$ . Quantum theory does not predict the exact detection of this radioactive event; it only gives the probability as  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Now let us send this well-sealed box with the cat far out in the space on an earth satellite. And the mechanical device inside the sealed box is now set to action, while the box is in space.

Next comes the big question. What has happened to the cat after the mechanical device starts operating? Has the particle been emitted from the weak radioactive source? In that case the cat is dead. If the particle is not emitted (the probability is 50:50) then the cat is alive. But what has really happened to the cat now? The answer, according to physics today, is threefold.

10. Ibid., p. 99.

11. Ibid., p. 100.

12. Ibid., p. 284.

13. Ibid., p. 274.

(A) According to classical physics, the cat is either dead or it is not dead. All that we have to do is to open the box and see which is the case.

(B) According to Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics, the situation is not so simple. According to this interpretation reality springs into being only when we observe it. Otherwise it exists in what modern physics calls 'a superposition state' or a world of uncertainty. The microscopic world does not emerge as an objective reality until we observe it.

Schrodinger's wave function contains the possibility that the cat is dead and also the possibility that the cat is alive. When we look into the box, and not before, one of these possibilities actualizes and the other possibility collapses. This is popularly known as the 'Copenhagen collapse' of the wave function. It is therefore absolutely necessary to look into the box before we see that any of the possibilities has occurred. Until the observation is made, there is only a wave function, and the question whether the cat is dead or alive has no meaning. In other words, unless a man is awake from deep sleep what is happening around his bed has no meaning for him. Ramakrishna's farmer, while in deep sleep, was absolutely unaware of the death of his only son of real life.

Einstein and De Broglie did not like this Copenhagen interpretation. They contented that a rigid, deterministic world was more acceptable than a world of uncertainty. Einstein intensely believed that some 'hidden variable' must be responsible for the unpredictable and uncertain behaviour of quantum particles. But until today no such 'hidden variable' has been found. Nobel prize winning physicist Eugene Wigner in 1961 propounded a second solution. To put it in the words of Michael Talbot, 'If Schrodinger's equation does represent a reality, perhaps the

consciousness itself is the hidden variable that decides which outcome of an event actually occurs.'<sup>14</sup> Wigner points out that 'the paradox of Schrodinger's cat occurs only after the entry of the measurement signal into the human consciousness'. He asserted that 'it is impossible to give description of Quantum mechanical principle without explicit reference to consciousness'.<sup>15</sup>

(C) Following this line of thinking in 1957 physicists Hugh Everett, John A. Wheeler and Niel Graham examined the issues. They subsequently created the third interpretation known as the Everett-Wheeler interpretation of quantum mechanics, which requires no changes in the basic mathematics of the Schrodinger's equation. This interpretation accepts that none of the branches of the Schrodinger's equation collapses. In fact this interpretation, as Talbot puts it, 'denies the existence of a physical reality'.<sup>16</sup>

The theory proposed by Hugh Everett and John Wheeler, solves this problem in the simplest and the most philosophical way. It claims that the wave function is a real thing. All of the possibilities that it represents are real, and they all happen. The orthodox interpretation of quantum mechanics is that only one of the possibilities contained in the wave function of an observed system actualizes, and the rest vanish. The Everett-Wheeler theory says that they all actualize, but in different worlds that coexist with one another.

According to the Everett-Wheeler theory, at the moment the wave function 'collapses', the universe splits into two worlds. When the dream broke, Ramakrishna's farmer's mind, at least for some time, was at once split into two worlds.

14. *Mysticism and New Physics*, op. cit., p. 33.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

the dream life and the waking life—both full of painful memory. Gary Zukav writes:

In other words, according to the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics, the development of the Schrodinger wave equation generates an endlessly proliferating number of possibilities. According to the Everette-Wheeler-Graham theory the development of the Schrodinger's wave equation generates an endlessly proliferating number of different branches of reality!<sup>17</sup>

This theory is called, appropriately, the Many Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics.

#### *Many Worlds Interpretation and Vedanta*

The Many-Worlds interpretation of Quantum Theory reminds us at once of the well-known idea of the snake-rope illusion according to Vedanta philosophy. When a man in a dimly moonlit night mistakes a rope for a snake, he really sees a snake. His nerves react with fear. He feels imminent danger. Probably his heart beat goes faster. A feeling of insecurity and fear instantly creeps into his mind. He at once rushes aside for a stick. But soon when somebody lights a lamp and he sees not the snake, but the rope, he feels instant relief. He even laughs at his own illusion and thanks God for his own mistake.

Now so long he saw 'snake' he was never aware of the presence of the rope. And when he became aware of the rope, the snake disappeared. Two persons who look at the snake-rope may react differently. One who already knows from past experiences that this is a rope, remains unperturbed. The other gets stricken with fear. A still better example, we find illustrated in the lives of saints. The same person who is looked down upon by the society as a fallen, or a sinner, is loved by the saints as the very image of God in flesh and blood. On the other hand,

saints are appreciated according to the mental level of the observers. Sri Ramakrishna was known as 'mad-priest' to some persons, as 'epileptic' to others, as sincere sadhaka to some few, and as the latest incarnation of God on earth to the fewest. And yet it was the same Sri Ramakrishna. According to the mental elevation or *the altered states of consciousness* (as modern psychology puts it) of the observers, Sri Ramakrishna, the observed, appeared differently to different observers during the same period of observation. And each observer was holding fast to his own view of Sri Ramakrishna. Each one was either indifferent to or unconscious of the other person's views. According to the Everette-Wheeler interpretation Ramakrishna's image proliferated into many branches of reality. Each one of these interpretations or each of 'these branches of reality' is true to the particular observer. This is how Schrodinger's wave function decomposes the one reality into many versions of the same reality.

Vivekananda sums up this Vedantic idea behind all our observations. 'This external world is only the world of suggestion. All that we see, we project out of our own minds... The wicked man sees this world as a perfect hell, the good as a perfect heaven and the perfect man sees nothing but God.' Vedanta philosophy believes that it is our own consciousness which creates the world outside. *Drg-Dṛṣya-Viveka* writes: *dṛṣyāḥ dhi bṛttayāḥ sākṣi dṛg eva na tu dṛṣyate*. 'All the scenes before us are projections of our intellect (activated by the presence of our consciousness). The only seer is the Self (the pure Consciousness) inside us. This Self cannot be seen because it is Itself the seer.'<sup>18</sup>

Modern physics and especially Schrodinger

17. *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, op. cit., p. 106.

18. *Dṛg Dṛṣya Viveka*, verse no. 1.



wave equation is only a confirmation of this age-old truth—One Consciousness creates many realities. 'Consciousness is numerically one', said Schrodinger. Max Plank, the father of modern physics, gave paramount importance to consciousness. Mr. I.W.N. Sullivan from the *Observer*, asked him in an interview (published in January 25, 1931, in the *Observer*) 'Do you think that consciousness can be explained in terms of matter and its law?' Max Plank answered that he did not. 'Consciousness', Max Plank continued, 'I regard as fundamental. I regard matter as derived from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing postulates consciousness.'<sup>19</sup> 'Quantum Physics' as Ken Wilber puts it, 'had taken another dualism, that of mental vs material, to the annihilating edge and there it had vanished.'<sup>20</sup>

Modern science which began with a strict division of mind and matter, today faces serious difficulties when the new findings of quantum physics have demolished the barrier between the two. Schrodinger wrote his celebrated book *Mind and Matter* in order to establish the new outlook which is an outlook of non-dualism, the Advaita. 'These shortcomings can hardly be avoided except by abandoning dualism', wrote Schrodinger. Wolfgang Pauli, the Nobel physicist famous for his exclusion principle, writes in words which are, in fact, interchangeable with the just quoted words of *Dig-Dṛṣya-Viveka*: 'From an inner centre the psyche seems to move outward in the sense of an extraversion, into the physical world.'<sup>21</sup>

19. C.E.M. Joad, *The Philosophical Aspects of Modern Science* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1932) p. 12.

20. *Spectrum of Consciousness*, op. cit., p. 38.

21. Quoted in *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, op. cit., p. 56.

Swami Vivekananda, the greatest exponent of Advaita Vedanta in modern times interprets this idea in his own way:

The internal universe, the real, is infinitely greater than the external, which is only a shadowy projection of the true one. This world is neither true nor untrue, it is the shadow of truth. 'Imagination is the gilded shadow of truth', says the poet.<sup>22</sup>

Matter is only externalised thought.<sup>23</sup>

On the subject, the object has been superimposed; the subject is the only reality, the other a mere appearance. The opposite view is untenable. Matter and the external world are but the soul in a certain state; in reality there is only one.<sup>24</sup>

We have seen that it is the subjective world that rules the objective. Change the subject, and the object is bound to change; purify yourself, and the world is bound to be purified.<sup>25</sup>

That which we have inside, we see outside. The boy has no thief inside and sees no thief outside. So with all knowledge.<sup>26</sup>

#### *Transcendence: mind's evolutionary advance*

Why is it that the new outlook of 'observer-created Reality' is not accepted by most scientists? The simple answer is that most of them are unaware of the new philosophical implications brought about by quantum physics. C. J. Herrick wrote in 1949, nearly eight years before the Everett-Wheeler theory was propounded, 'The generally accepted idea of what natural science is and what it is for, are out of date and need radical revision.'<sup>27</sup>

Nearly forty years passed since Herrick spoke of the need of this radical revision.

22. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979) vol. 2, p. 11. (Hereafter referred to as *Complete Works*)

23. *Complete Works* (1979) vol. 7, p. 17.

24. *Ibid*, p. 32.

25. *Complete Works* (1977) vol. 1, p. 426.

26. *Complete Works* (1976) vol. 2, p. 87.

27. *The Nature of Human Consciousness*, Edited by Robert E. Ornstein, (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1973) p. 13.

Today the Vedantic ideas are being increasingly accepted by both scientists and psychologists. In a series of articles published in the *Journal of Philosophy*, John Dewey, and A. F. Bentley, gave a new epistemology for modern science. They called it 'transactional approach', which meant that the

observations of this general type sees man-in-action not as something radically set over against an environing world, nor yet as merely action 'in' a world, but as action *of* and *by* the world in which the man belongs as an integral constituent.

Abraham Maslow, Stanislov Grof and others speak of this new psychology of holistic vision as 'transpersonal psychology'. The introduction of the new psychology will be the beginning of a 'higher understanding,' as nobel-physicist Eugene Wigner thinks. 'At any rate it should be the next decisive breakthrough toward a more integrated understanding of the world...', he says.<sup>28</sup>

Vedanta knew of this 'integrated understanding of life' ages ago. According to Vedanta the observer creates realities both in the dream and the waking state. How does the consciousness create things in dream? Says the *Brhadaranyaka Upaniṣad* (4.3.10): 'In that (dream) state there are neither chariots, nor animals to be hitched to them, nor roads, yet It (the Self) creates the chariots, animals and roads'. How does the individual see things in dream, although he sleeps with eyes closed inside a dark room? Says the same Upaniṣad (4.3.11): 'The effulgent entity (the Self) that travels alone makes the body inert through the dream and itself awake and taking a luminous bit of the organs it witnesses things that are dormant'. According to Vedanta the waking state is no more real

than the dream state. The above Upaniṣad says again (4.3.14): 'Others say that the waking itself is its (of the Self) the dream state, for one sees in dream only those objects that he sees in the waking state'. It is Knower, the Self, the Pure Consciousness which is the witness of all these fleeting phenomena both in the dream and the waking state.

'How to know the Knower?' ask Upaniṣads. Unless we know the knower we cannot also know that the known is only the projection of the Knower. This Knower is our Pure Consciousness, which is the only seer, the one all-pervading Existence, the one all-inclusive Knowledge. This Pure Consciousness projects the entire universe just as a spider projects its web. The external and a separate universe is, therefore, only a superimposition, due to our desires and will, on the Pure Consciousness which knows everything as One. Why cannot we think like this? At the lower levels of our consciousness, our mind brings the idea of duality—I am the 'observer' and *that* is the thing 'observed'. Says the *Brhadaranyaka Upaniṣad* (1.5.9): 'Whatever is to be known is a form of the mind; because the mind is what is to be known'. As our mind gets purified of all dualistic desires and wills, the lower mind ceases to exist. It is then slowly transformed into the higher mind and feels the basic oneness of all existence. Sri Ramakrishna says that after the realization of the superconsciousness, the 'I of ignorance' is changed into the 'I of knowledge'. Then the seer sees everything as one. While western psychology speaks of only two layers of consciousness, the Vedanta speaks of a still superior level of consciousness known as the 'superconscious'. It is at this superconscious level that we see a holistic universe, and realize the Self as the *eternal* witness of the *temporal* and the external world.

28. *Handbook of Parapsychology*, Edited by Benjamin B. Wolman, (New York: Nostrand Reinolt Co. 1977) p. 741.

In 1977, in a seminar on *Mind: Approaches to its Understanding*, the celebrated Indian scientist Dr. E. C. G. Sudarshan dealt on the higher levels of our mind. He says, 'In contrast to a standard computer through which information flows passively, the mind is far from equilibrium. New order of the laws of nature suggest themselves to the mind. The mind gains knowledge and insight'. Dr. Sudarshan speaks, in the Vedantic tradition, of *mano-nasa* (the dissolution of the lower mind), 'transcendence' or 'the quiet state of alertness'. He quotes the Gita in order to illustrate this holistic or 'transcendent' awareness. 'O Arjuna, I am the essence of all entities and reside in every entity, at their beginning, middle and end.' Dr. Sudarshan's comments on these lines are worth quoting again: 'The vision of the cosmos as God, and the individual mind as an aspect of it, is the viswarupa vouchsafed to Arjuna and to Yasoda. In this cosmic awareness all conflicts cease and supreme peace reigns.' Says the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad (4.3.30): 'That the knower does not (apparently) know in that state is because, although (really) knowing in that state it does not know, for there cannot be any absence of knowing on the part of the Knower, since the latter is imperishable, but there is no second entity differentiated from it, which it can know.'<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup>. *Mind: Approaches to its Understanding*, published by the Director, National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Bangalore (India). (1977) pp. 74,56,76,76,75,69.

### *The final message*

What is the lesson we get from Schrodinger's wave equation? It is the same message of Vedanta—the message of self-transformation. Let us purify and elevate ourselves through holy thoughts, holy company, sublime ideals, prayers, meditation, worship of saints, compassion for others and service without attachment. Then the world appears as full of divinity. At the altered level of higher consciousness, the doubting Thomas saw the vision not of a ghost, but of a resurrected Christ. Vivekananda explains 'When we have given up desires, then alone shall we be able to read and enjoy this universe of God. Then everything will become deified. Nooks and corners, by-ways and shady places, which we thought dark and unholy, will be all deified...' *Dr̥g Dr̥ṣya Viveka* writes: 'When a man has been freed from the body consciousness (i.e., when he no more identifies himself as the tiny body-mind complex) and when he has known the paramatman (the Self, the eternal witness within) wherever he sees, he sees only the presence of One Reality everywhere.' Vivekananda gives us the final message in our quest for Truth through Schrodinger's wave equation:

This is the line of thought. All will be metamorphosed as soon as you begin to see things in that light. If you put God in your every movement, in your conversation, in your form, in every thing, the whole scene changes, and the world instead of appearing as one of woe and misery will become a heaven.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup>. *Complete Works* (1976) vol. 2, pp. 148-49.

# ETHICAL TEACHINGS OF THE DHAMMAPADA

DR. YOGA DHYAN AHUJA

The Dhammapada... 'The whole work combines literary beauty, depth of thought and human feeling in a rare degree. Not only is it irradiated with the calm light of peace, faith and happiness but it glows with sympathy, with the desire to do good and help those who are struggling in the mire of passion and delusion.'<sup>1</sup>

The Dhammapada, which forms a part of the Sutta Pitaka, the second of the three 'Baskets' of the Pali Canon, consists of 423 verses classified into twenty-six chapters. The contents of this prominent Buddhist scripture are believed to be the utterances of Gautama Buddha or his disciples. However, many of these have been actually culled from different other Buddhist texts, for example, the Thera Gāthā and the Therī Gāthā as well as from some pre-Buddhist religious works such as the *Mahābhārata* and the *Manu Smṛti*.

This small book forms one of the most popular religious texts of Asia. Dr. T.W. Rhys Davids, one of the pioneer western scholars of Buddhism, gave thought to the marked similarity of the early Christian hymns with the chants gathered and grouped in the Dhammapada. Speaking of the very strong appeal of some of the verses of the Dhammapada to the 'western sense of religious beauty', he adds that if the hymns sung by the early Christians could ever be regained and the contents sorted out and placed under different headings such as Faith, Love, Hope, The Converted Man, The Saviours, The Angels and so on (just as had been done in the case of the Dhammapada) 'we should have a Christian

Dhammapada ; and very precious such a collection would be.'<sup>2</sup>

Ethics is central in the Buddhist tenets. The Middle Path of the Buddha which avoids both the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification stresses the paramount importance of the right conduct of life. Buddhism has a psychological bias. The whole approach of the Buddha in his ethical teaching is humanistic and existential and is aimed at bringing about a right awareness of the misery of existence and thereby awaken man to the need of enlightenment and salvation.

The Dhammapada is a short compendium of the Buddhist teachings. Some outlines of the religious concern, the social significance and no less importantly, the place of the individual self-discipline in the teachings of this work made a rewarding and purposeful study.

## *Religious emphasis*

Among the paths, the eight-fold path is the best  
Among the truths, the four-fold is the best.  
Among the Dhammas—virtues—detachment is the best.

Among the bipeds, one with sight is the best.

(Dhammapada: 273)

The Four Aryan or noble truths are (i) suffering (ii) the arising of suffering (iii) the cessation of suffering and (iv) the noble eight-fold path for the cessation of suffering.<sup>3</sup> The noble path, mentioned though not detailed in the Dhammapada, consists of the following eight 'limbs' and

1. Sir Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism: An Historical Sketch* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.) Vol. 1, p. 296.

2. T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhism: Its History and Literature* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896) p. 68.

3. *The Dhammapada*, verse 191.

is again divided into three groups of Prajna or wisdom, Shīla or ethics and Samādhi or concentration:

- WISDOM: i. Right Views  
 ii. Right Resolve  
 ETHICS: iii. Right Speech  
 iv. Right Conduct  
 v. Right Livelihood  
 SAMADHI: vi. Right Endeavour  
 vii. Right Mindfulness  
 viii. Right Concentration (Samadhi)

A Buddhist vows to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma—the Buddhist Doctrine, and the Sangha—the Buddhist Order.<sup>4</sup> The Dhammapada all through, contains many high praises of the Doctrine. It asserts that he who loves the Dhamma lives a happy life. The Dhamma leads to calmness. The gift of the Dhamma surpasses all gifts. Homage is paid to the Buddhas, that is, the enlightened ones, and those who follow their instructions. The virtues of obeying the Doctrine are greatly extolled. There is a positive emphasis on the teachings having been realized through understanding and experience on the part of the teacher, that is, the Buddha. 'Glory comes to one' the Dhammapada asserts, 'who is earnest, mindful, virtuous in his actions and thoughtful in his deeds, is restrained and, who lives according to the Dhamma and is discerning.'<sup>5</sup>

Acquiring of Prajna or wisdom is commended. One should awaken oneself before it is too late to be wise. A single day's life of the wise is better than a hundred years' living of the unwise.

Tanha or craving is the root of sorrow, grief and fear. Tanha is hard to uproot. It is full of poison. It grows like a creeper. It spells destruction. End of craving is

the end of suffering. 'There is no fire like passion; no spectre-like malice; no snare like folly and no torrent like Tanha—craving.'

Sages have a place of esteem in the Dhammapada. The Bhikkhu and the Arhat, the Pandit and the Brahmana have been amply and repeatedly admired and their virtues have been adequately defined. A Bhikkhu (or Bhikṣu)—the Buddhist mendicant—is urged to develop such qualities as calmness, restraint, chastity, and harmlessness towards all living beings. He should shun all vices such as envy, passion, and hatred. He should free himself from Tanha or craving and practise complete restraint of senses. He should get rid of ignorance. He should take to solitude. He should be free from attachment, and the destructive taints, and rise above the concepts of 'good and evil'. The attributes of a Thera or the Elder in Buddhism include truthfulness, adherence to the Doctrine, harmlessness, restraint and freedom from impurity. In the same way an Arhat is one who develops the merits of sense control, freedom from sorrow and lives a homeless life.

Similarly a Brahmana stems craving. He purges himself of impurities, anger, pride, lust and attachment. He disregards pleasures of life, and is dutiful, virtuous, pure, homeless and heroic. He has reduced his wants and does not take that which is not given to him. He claims nothing as his own and is above vice and virtue, pleasure and pain. And, above all, a Brahmana is not by birth or by appearance but by purity, truth and righteousness.

Likewise the moral excellence of a wise and learned person or a Pandit is in freedom from sloth and sorrow. Such a person is above vice, is calm, forgiving, free from hatred and is fearless. He guards his tongue and remains unmoved by blame or praise. He knows that he

4. Ibid., verse 190.

5. Ibid., verse 24.

does not know. The cardinal quality of a learned person is self-discipline:

Canal-men bend waters  
Fletchers bend arrows  
Carpenters bend wood  
The learned discipline themselves<sup>6</sup>

### *Social norms*

Disease, old age and death: these are flames and fires. To Goutama Buddha the whole world appeared ablaze—being consumed by this great conflagration. When the house is on fire, there are two ways open: extinguish it or escape. And, the victim deserves help and sympathy. There is no room for fun in a burning house. The Buddha took human predicament very seriously. Consequently, a spirit of solemnity appears to shadow his teachings and preachings.

Shila or ethical merit ranks high in Buddhist doctrine.

Good deeds are extolled. 'Just as there are pretty and colourful flowers but devoid of fragrance so are the words of one who is sweet of speech but lacking in action.'<sup>7</sup> Bad deeds are easy to perform and good deeds, difficult. Exercise of unusual discrimination is stressed in one's performance of deeds. 'Those who are ashamed where not to be ashamed, because of wrong beliefs, meet evil fate.'<sup>8</sup>

Buddhism, a religion of immense compassion, advocates great reverence for life. Ahimsa, non-injury, is exceedingly admired. No one who harms others can be an Arya or noble. Life is dear to all. Every one of the living beings is like the other living beings. So let one neither kill nor induce killing. All living beings long for happiness. If a person seeking his

own happiness kills another living being, he does not find happiness after his death.

A virtuous man is always happy, here and hereafter. Perhaps the whole multitude of virtues has been enumerated at one place or the other in the contents of the Dhammapada. A life free from sloth is lauded. Sloth is sorrow. Dutiful and active living is commended.

Attachment with the world and the worldly pleasures is denounced. Even the love of family is strongly disapproved. 'Fetters made of iron, wood and hemp are not as strong as those forged by the attachment of wealth and family.'<sup>9</sup> Worldly love brings grief and fear. Man should cut off all entanglement with woman.

It is important to keep the senses under restraint. And to avoid arrogance, miserliness, falsehood, sin, evil, adultery and even yearnings for that which appears to be delightful. One should give up the habit of slander. It is easier to find faults with others than with one's own self. On the other hand, one is exhorted, time and again, to develop all the moral virtues such as faith, vigilance, thoughtfulness, charity and tolerance.

Enmity never ends by enmity. It ends by love alone. This is the ancient law.

Better alone than in bad company. While travelling, if one does not find congenial companion, let one move alone. A fool is no company. Be in the company of one who tells you of your faults.

### *Self-discipline*

One is the Lord of one's self  
One is the refuge of one's self  
Therefore should one control  
Oneself just as the trader his horse.<sup>10</sup>

The Dhammapada tells one to guard oneself like a fortress. The unwary

6. Ibid., verse 80.

7. Ibid., verse 51.

8. Ibid., verse 316.

9. Ibid., verse 345.

10. Ibid., verse 380.

indulgent falls an easy prey to Māra, the tempter. In order to save oneself from his onslaughts one should bridle one's mind. Accordingly restraint of thought, word, and deed is repeatedly advised.

The mind is hard to tame. It is fickle, subtle and capricious. Just as rain penetrates an ill-thatched house, so does passion make its way into an unrestrained mind.

Sense of duty is important. A thoughtless person may not be aware of what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. First of all, let one mind one's own business. It is good to be concerned with one's duty to oneself. Teach yourself before you teach others. Shape your own life before trying to shape others' lives. And that is what the Buddha himself had done.

'Better than conquering all the other people is the conquest of one's self.'<sup>11</sup>

Just as the rust arising from iron eats away that from which it arises, similarly the fickle evil-doer is led to evil fate by his own deeds. 'Shun all evil, amass virtue, purify your heart.' This is what the Buddhas teach.<sup>12</sup>

11. 'Ibid., verse 105.

12. Ibid., verse 183.

Sir Charles Eliot observes an important negative aspect in the four noble truths of the Buddha and remarks that there is no trace of human life being 'a service to be rendered to God.'<sup>13</sup> Evidently God is not the Buddha's concern. He does not teach or preach about God or the soul. He is silent on such topics. Apparently concepts of this nature and their elaboration do not fall in line with his thinking. All his endeavours are man-centred: these are not God-ward but these are inward. He neither accepts life as a service to God nor does he look forward to Him for grace. Even in his last words to his disciples, he exhorted them to work out their salvation diligently. The main emphasis in the Buddha's teachings is on self-discipline. The entire burden is one's own to carry. One is to sink or to swim for oneself. The Buddha perhaps summed up his teachings when addressing his favourite disciple Ānanda, he said:

*Ātma dīpo bhava:* 'Be a lamp unto yourself'.

13. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, op cit., vol. 1, p. 205.

## THE WAY OF THE HOLY MOTHER

DR. M. SIVARAMAKRISHNA

'We could get some inkling at least of the greatness of the Master,' confessed Swami Saradananda, 'but of this lady (the Holy Mother) we cannot understand anything. She has drawn the veil of Maya so thick around Her that no one can see through it and have a glimpse of Her greatness.'<sup>1</sup>

This confession is, paradoxically, both baffling and understandable. It is puzzling because Saradananda was not only the most definitive (and divinely designated?) biographer of the Great Master, Sri Ramakrishna, but was, himself, as a direct disciple, a sage of piercing spiritual insight. Indeed, he made the apparently startling

1. See Swami Virswarananda, 'The Holy Mother—The Ideal of Womanhood', *The Vedanta*

*Kesari* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math) Vol. XLI, No. 3, July 1954, p. 35.



yet entirely credible statement that 'Nothing beyond my spiritual experience has been recorded in the book, *Sri Ramakrishna Lila-Prasanga*.<sup>2</sup> For such a one to express bafflement in understanding the Mother is itself baffling. Yet, in a sense, it is understandable for the answer to this phenomenon is there in the statement itself. In effect, it lies in the thick veil of Maya that the Mother drew around Herself! The implicit significance of this act is the clue to understand the Mother and her message.

## II

To begin with, 'Maya' in Swamiji's classic aphorism is 'a statement of fact'.<sup>3</sup> The fact being contradiction, if one chooses and acts through 'splitting off' of categories in an attempt to resolve the contradiction, then one is caught in the very spiral of cause and effect. Therefore, in living, moving and having one's being in this world of *maya*, one has to not so much act or react as *enact*. But the enactment—every little bit of it—and its corresponding experience is responded to in such a way that they become contexts for a leap into awareness of the underlying Reality.

Yet such is the complexity of 'Maya' that this awareness is both continual and intermittent, 'total' and 'peak'. Thus when a disciple asked, 'Do you ever remember your real nature?' the Mother's reply is one in tune with the implicit paradox of the life of all mystics and sages: 'Yes, I recall it now and then. At that time I say to myself, what is this that I am doing? What is all this about?

2. Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna: The Great Master*, Swami Jagadananda tr. (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1952), xxiv.

3. cf. Swami Vivekananda: *Jnana Yoga* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1980), pp. 48-49.

Then I remember the house, buildings and children and forget my real self.'<sup>4</sup> But this remembering, in the case of the Mother, is a willed and willing suspension of awareness *as an indispensable precondition for enactment in the world*. Since it is willed, the suspension can be dissolved instantaneously. When the disciple asks, 'Well, Mother, do you always remember your real nature?' pat came the Mother's reply: 'How could that be? How then could I perform all these duties? But even in the midst of my activities, *whenever I wish I can understand by the slightest effort* that all this is the mere play of Mahamaya.'<sup>5</sup>

Thus *enacting* implies the willing suspension, conversely, of disbelief in Maya i.e., that all that we are doing is illusory and, therefore, pointless. On the contrary, the world is affirmed and not negated as nonexistent through a cold, passionless attitude of a disillusioned cynic. Since *maya* is a fact of experience, the game has to be played, the *lila* has to be gone through. Moreover, like all mimesis, it is a model for emulation: when a disciple protested about her 'strenuous life' and 'hard work', Mother declared 'I have done much more than is necessary to make my life a model,' adding with incredible humility, 'please bless me that I may serve others as long as I live.'<sup>6</sup>

From this perspective, what the Mother said about the Master is applicable to herself with equal, if not more, logic: 'All the acts of Sri Ramakrishna were directed to God alone.... That was the

4. *Teachings of Sri Sarada Devi the Holy Mother* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1983), p. 159. All the quotations from the Holy Mother are from this book. Hereafter referred to as *Teachings*.

5. *Teachings*, p. 160. (emphasis added)

6. *Teachings*, pp. 161-162.

nature of his teaching.<sup>7</sup> To direct all acts invariably to God is in fact to dramatize in the theatre of existence possibilities for actualizing its wholeness.

### III

This wholeness is for the Mother rooted in one principle: a simple but comprehensive clue to the implicate order of life. She pointed out:

I tell you one thing—if you want peace, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; the whole world is your own.<sup>8</sup>

The statement is sutra-like in its terseness and far-ranging *dhvani*. To begin with: 'if you want peace'. The hypothetical (conditional) word 'if' is extraordinarily explosive in its implications: do we *really* want peace? don't we pretend (to others and, worse, to ourselves) that we want it; a pretension exposed by the fact that we actually do everything except that which is conducive to and productive of this peace? For, to many of us peace has correlatives in possessions, addictions, gadgets. When some of these belie our unending quest, we do not give up but substitute the grosser correlatives by the subtler ones: if we give up money, we seek, instead, celebrity, fame etc. The word 'if' is not, therefore, conditional: it is an operative reality for many, nay most, people. The inevitable result is that the sterile stillness of our mental pool choked with the mud of possessions, desires etc.—assuming that some kind of peace is achieved after struggle—is mistaken for the peace that the Mother is pointing to—the peace that passeth understanding.

The fact that people ostensibly desire but do not in reality want peace is an oddity that never ceased to amaze the Holy Mother:

People come to me and say, 'I have no peace in life, I never feel the presence of God, tell me how to find peace,' and so on. Then I look at them and at myself and wonder why they talk in this manner. Is everything about me beyond the common run? I have never known unrest. And as far as the presence of God, it's mine for the taking. I can see Him whenever I like.<sup>9</sup>

Obviously, the fact that people want peace but do not do what is necessary to achieve it is part of delusion. But, interestingly enough, what is to be done to achieve this peace is not something extraordinary: it is not, to use the Mother's words again, 'beyond the common run.' It is there 'for the taking' and the method the Mother points out is invariably psychological and eminently practical: the practice of detecting the Divine in everyone by the transcendence of fragmentation—fragmentation which introduces the chronic disease of judgement through fault-finding.

### IV

For attaining peace 'do not,' says the Mother, 'find fault with others.' This phenomenon is a very complex psychological syndrome which needs diagnosis for eventual cure.

To begin with, finding fault is basically a matter of *samskara*. Some are, presumably, by nature inclined to this. The Mother's statement clinches the matter: 'I *cannot* see others' faults,' she declared categorically and added (by way of explanation we can say), 'I am simply *not made that way*.' If this is unusual, it is not freakish either: 'there are enough people to criticize others.'

7. *Teachings*, p. 136.

8. *Teachings*, p. 97.

9. *Teachings*, p. 158.

Surely the world will not come to an end if I refrain from doing so.<sup>10</sup>

'Not made that way' is Mother's idiom for the antecedent predispositions which form the cluster we call *samskara*. Some are *made that way* and the result, the Mother rightly notes, is 'there is evil in your mind. That's why you can't find peace.'<sup>11</sup> This evil of fault-finding takes, to simplify, two forms: either one finds faults *in* others or finds faults *with* them. The first is an interesting context in which we find faults in others but refuse to see or acknowledge these faults as, in fact, reflections of our own innate shortcomings. We almost automatically, but quite indefensibly, assume that we are—*ourselves*—exempt from the faults we find in others. But, of course, our own exemption from these faults, once achieved, teaches—or ought to teach—tolerance, and therefore, freedom from criticism.

The second context of fault-finding stems not so much from an innate tendency as from the implicit disappointment that they—the others—have not done what you expected of them. In other words, the failure of others to live up to our expectations, to fulfil our demands, makes us find fault with them. If in the first case, it is self-deception (the myopic inability to see the presence of faults in oneself), in the second, it is pure selfishness of an overriding ego insistently demanding satisfaction of its whims through others. In either case, the result is decadence of the mental apparatus. As the Mother puts it:

Man finds faults in others *after bringing down his own mind to that level*. Does anything ever happen to another if you enumerate his faults? It only injures you.<sup>12</sup>

Thus what began as the process examining the faults of others turns out to be the basic step in all meditational therapy: quest for knowledge and experience of the self free from all imbalances.

## V

This brings us to the final question: how can we avoid fault-finding which is, we saw, rooted in unawareness of the real nature of the Self? In other words, how do we achieve what the Buddhists describe as 'purifying the mind of negative imprints,' thereby 'accumulating merit, that is, positive energy and insight'?<sup>13</sup>

The Mother makes the process clear and the process is divided into three steps: (a) seeing one's own faults, (b) shedding the feeling of regarding others as aliens, as strangers and (c) learning to make the world, the whole world your own. This is the Mother's diagnosis and cure for the disease of self-delusion and, in keeping with the integral ways of Sacred Living, all these three steps are intricately intertwined. For, seeing one's own faults—along with those of others—releases us from the 'I'-Thou' split with 'I' as pure and selfless and the 'other' as faulty and selfish. Once this is done, the 'other' ceases to be a stranger and becomes, as it were, an extension of one's own. Finally, once the sense of others as separate beings is transcended, the world is transformed, becoming one's own. The invariable outcome is peace.

But one should not overlook the implications of the word the Mother uses: 'learn'; 'learn to make the world your own.' Thus, the art of achieving oneness with the world—the perception of the wholeness of life—is not (at any rate for many of us) automatic or spontaneous. It

10. *Teachings*, p. 98.

11. *Teachings*, p. 34.

12. *Teachings*, p. 98.

13. Kathleen McDonald: *How to Meditate* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1985), p. 150.

has to be learnt—the hard way, often. The Holy Mother herself constantly refers to her own efforts in this direction (in spite of the fact that as the counterpart of the Great Master, there was, in her case, need for effort). With disarming candour she told once:

Formerly people's faults appeared to my eyes also. Then with tears I prayed to the Master, 'Master, I can no longer bear finding fault.' Then only this defect left me.<sup>14</sup>

Later on she identified this with *tapasya* itself, as the *sadhana* of 'learning'.

Basic to this learning is inner-directed love expressing itself in religious, psychological and social contexts with an awareness that in the ecosystem the self cannot be a separate, independent entity without festering in its self-imposed isolation. It is awareness, to use Ken Wilber's words that, 'a person is neither a thing nor a process, but an opening or a clearing through which the Absolute can manifest.'<sup>15</sup> Or as the physicist David Bohm puts it, is rooted in the faith that 'the ground of all being enfolds a supreme intelligence' which is 'the source of extraordinary order present in the universe,' and, above all, 'the common feeling that this supreme intelligence is penetrated by love and compassion.'<sup>16</sup>

For the Holy Mother this supreme intelligence shot through with love and compassion was a self-evident fact of continuous experience. It not only negated the fault-finding but found a place and a

value for every thing and every experience, however trivial they apparently were. The resulting spectrum ranged from giving alms to a beggar not because of charity, but because 'it is not right to deprive a man of his just due,'<sup>17</sup> through keeping a banana peel securely because 'even this is the cow's due,' and 'one must place it before the cow',<sup>18</sup> to preserving an empty basket—about to be thoughtlessly discarded—for 'some future use.'<sup>19</sup>

Concern for the wholeness of the ecosystem thus meant concern and love for all—including aberrant specimens in her own household and devotees eager to get initiation from her but too sluggish to maintain the initial momentum. In fact, subtleties of dharma are cleared in terms of this concern and care for others as extensions of one's self. These extensions are incredibly inclusive: they include every species, including the cat whose 'dharma', the Master declares, 'is to steal,' and, moreover, 'who is there to feed it lovingly?' Above all, love in this regard has a profounder reason and the Mother made it clear in a moment of epiphanic revelation: 'scold the cat but do not beat it. Please feed it regularly...I dwell inside the cat too.'<sup>20</sup>

What the Holy Mother meant when she said, 'make the world your own,' so that through the corresponding knowledge and experience we perceive that 'the whole world is our own,' thus, involves love as the means. But, then, how to love all with a sense of togetherness? The Mother's answer is direct and simple:

Let me tell you how to love all equally. Do not demand anything of those you love. If you make demands, some will give you more and

14. *Teachings*, pp. 97-98.

15. Cited, Frances Vaughan, *The Inward Arc* (London: Shambhala, 1986), p. 39.

16. David Bohm: 'Fragmentation and Wholeness in Religion and in Science', *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* XX, No. 2, June 1985, p. 130. Also, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, 1983).

17. *Teachings*, p. 114

18. *Teachings*, p. 114

19. *Teachings*, p. 119

20. *Teachings*, pp. 102-3

some less. In that case you will love more those who give you more and less those who give you less. Thus your love will not be the same for all. You will not be able to love all impartially.<sup>21</sup>

What the Mother says is sound psychology which has always been the characteristic feature of the Sacred Way. To demand anything of those we love is obviously a contradiction: for, if someone really loves us—and does not regard us as pegs to hang his own self-love—we need not demand; that love itself will propel him/her to give us what we need. Conversely, if on demand something is given, then it is not given spontaneously (the invariable quality of love) but under duress. If this is true, then the question of somebody giving less and somebody more doesn't arise. Impartial love for all is thus possible, both logically and psychologically, only when no demands are made on another. Love becomes free from fantasies and fears which, regarding it as a possession, always brings into being.

Thus, the Holy Mother's simple recipe of freedom from fault-finding culminates

21. *Teachings*, p. 101.

in the final goal of all striving: transcendent love which radiates from the centre of wholeness and order. Even when the spiritual implications cannot be grasped completely, in the context of our contemporary quest for a harmonious social order, the Mother's instruction is invaluable and indispensable wisdom. As Frances Vaughan has put it:

Self-awareness can no longer be considered an esoteric luxury for a few educated individuals. It has become a social necessity. We are only beginning to understand the possibilities inherent in mastering the mind, but the challenges of our time call for accelerated learning. Humanity is gaining access to vast reservoirs of undeveloped potential, but unless egoic excesses are curbed by discriminating wisdom, we run the risk of destroying ourselves<sup>22</sup>

It is this 'discriminating wisdom' in the Holy Mother's life and teaching, that radiates as intersecting points of a holistic consciousness.

22. Frances Vaughan, *The Inward Arc: Healing and Wholeness in Psychotherapy and Spirituality*, p. 151

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA : REFLECTIONS ON LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

SRIMATI MANJULA

When a prophet of the stature of Vivekananda makes his appearance, he illumines the dormant contours of human consciousness in its infinite variety. He not only revivifies a usable past but also animates its basic impulses which need to be redefined and reintegrated. In the process he gives us inestimable revaluations of extant art, literature and culture. It is

in this context that Vivekananda's views of Indian literary and linguistic heritage become significant areas of assessment.

The essential sublimity and loftiness of Indian poetry was an object of deep adoration and love for Vivekananda, and this is evident in his regard for and appreciation of the two most ancient epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. He

pointed out:

The two most ancient epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata embody the manners and customs, the state of society, civilization, of the ancient Indians. These came down to us in a very beautiful arrangement without equal in the literature of world.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that Vivekananda regarded epics as the authoritative encyclopaedias of Indian life and wisdom, portraying an ideal civilization, and humanity ought to perpetuate its implicit values. These values made these two epics penetrate into every strata of Indian society and region, right from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari. Analysing the significance of the epic he observed:

The Epic exercises the same authority in India as Homer's poems did over the Greeks.. All sorts of tales, legends and myths, philosophical treatises, scraps of history, and various discussions have been added to it from time to time, until it is a vast, gigantic mass of literature, and through it runs the old, original story.<sup>2</sup>

Vivekananda makes here two seminal observations. He has, first, suggested a comparative perspective by highlighting the analogous authority of Homer's poetry among the Greeks. Second, he has underscored the fact that no epic is static. Its intrinsic dynamism and accommodative, plastic structure make the incorporation of several motifs of its cultural background possible. But this incorporation is done in such a way that the structure of the original story is more or less kept intact. These views of Vivekananda are extremely valuable when we keep in mind the origin and evolution of epic both in its oral and literary genres.

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), vol. 4, p. 63. (Hereafter referred to as *Complete Works*).

2. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

These pieces of original and archetypal literature emerged first in India and were then translated into other languages over the world, influencing the epics, ballads and fables of other countries. Vivekananda affirms the Indian contribution to world literary traditions thus:

In literature, our epics and poems and dramas rank as high as those of any language. Our 'Shakuntala' was summarized by Germany's greatest poet as 'Heaven and earth united'. India has given to the world the fables of Aesop, which were copied by Aesop from an old Sanskrit book, it has given the Arabian Nights, even the story of Cinderella and the Beanstalks.<sup>3</sup>

Another significant insight we find in Vivekananda which needs sustained scrutiny is that Indian poetry achieves universality not merely in terms of its secular concerns but also in terms of its pervasive preoccupation with the several areas of perennial philosophy and psychology. In other words, in India the poetic genre was heightened and made sublime by employing it for the exploration of the nature of the spiritual quest for redemption. Moreover, the poetic mode was used not merely for mimetic rendering of reality (a common element of all literary traditions) but more significantly and almost uniquely for expressing universally valid transcendental experiences. This attempt to embody spiritual insights in sublime poetry—as in the *Vedas*, and the *Upanishads*, and the epics—accounts not only for the universality of Indian poetic tradition but also the unique view of literature as acquiring the potency and liberating power of 'mantra'. If *mantra* is, etymologically, that which liberates (*trayate*) us through contemplation (*manana*), then the poetry found in *Upanishads* and other scriptures including epics becomes a mode not of aesthetic decoration

3. *Complete Works* (1976), vol. 2, p. 512.

but eventual liberation. From this point of view what Vivekananda says about the Upanishads is extremely significant.

The entire Upanishadic literature was perfectly impersonal, based on the mystical experiences of hundreds of seers. Therefore, these ideas are universal. The broad humanitarian and universal appeal of the Upanishads influenced Vivekananda most powerfully. No wonder that he set the Upanishads above all theological literature based on the life of any one prophet or Godman. Here, in the Upanishads, was according to him, the accumulated knowledge of Oneness of seers, anonymous, unknown and unnamed anywhere in those books. Thus the names mentioned are not important, but it is the ideas that matter. Vivekananda wrote:

Although we find many names, and many speakers, and many teachers in the Upanishads, not one of them stands as an authority of the Upanishads, not one verse is based upon the life of anyone of them.<sup>4</sup>

As Aristotle has said, history gives us only particulars while poetry gives us the universals. That is the reason why the Oedipus of history had only a limited appeal, while *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles has become an object of universal experience and appeal. The entire Upanishads and the Vedas have got this element of impersonal and universal appeal. They have a sublimity of their own which was not to be seen in Homer, Virgil or Milton.

The Upanishads present before us the spirit of the sublime. Behind the simple verses, we always have glimpses of sublimity. Vivekananda repeatedly quoted the following verse from *Kathopanishad* as the most significant example of the sublime Indian Poetry:

Na tatra soryō bhāti na chandra tārakam  
Nemā vidyuto bhānti kutoyam agnih  
Tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam  
Tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti.<sup>5</sup>

There the sun shines not nor the moon, nor the stars, what to speak of this fire? There dwells the One whose light radiates the whole universe.

According to Vivekananda the journey from the world of the senses to the world of the supersensuous is the essential theme of the Upanishadic poetry. He states:

As we listen to the heart-stirring poetry . . . we are taken, as it were, off from the world of the senses, off even from the world of intellect, and brought to that world which can never be comprehended, and yet is always with us.<sup>6</sup>

This is obviously the quality which rescues poetry from affording mere sensuous titillation or exquisite but essentially sterile aesthetic pleasure. In other words, Vivekananda holds that poetry such as the one found in the *Upanishads* is a means of awakening the human consciousness to an awareness which transcends all art, indeed, all thought itself—though it makes use of art. Not all poetry can do this, but the very value of poetry as an enduring mode of knowledge lies in this function. It makes us transcend the sensuous, the cerebral and the conceptual, and we realize with its help that eternal self which is the substratum and residue of the senses, intellect and feeling.

Classical Indian poetry, in Vivekananda's view, is, therefore, marked by its God-centred world view. It is spiritually oriented and it is because of this orientation alone that the classical Indian poetry, especially the epics, survived. While the other poems with temporal themes were to a large extent eclipsed, this poetry of the

4. *Complete Works* (1973), vol. 3, p. 332.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 385.

6. *Ibid.*



soul continues to inspire us. In fact Vivekananda declared unambiguously that these religious songs have one central idea, the idea of realization.

Vivekananda's own poems belong to this class of eternal, spiritual poems of India. As we have seen earlier, his famous poem composed originally in English, entitled 'Kali the Mother', stands out as the finest expression in English language of spiritual sublimity ever expressed in modern times. The underlying theme of this poem is the feeling and realization of God in the midst of the terrible sufferings of life:

Who dares misery love,  
And hug the form of Death,  
Dance in Destruction's dance,  
To him the Mother comes.<sup>7</sup>

Vivekananda firmly held that in the description of exalted states of being and evoking an effective picture of our cosmos in all its complexity and variety, Indian poets are incomparable. While poets of other traditions present the mystical through the sensuous, classical Indian poets present even the sensuous through the mystical. For instance, Milton presents the darkness and chaos before the cosmos began but his presentation does not have the depth and density we find, for instance, in the vedic hymn of creation. Vivekananda, clarifying this point, says:

If you read the Samhita portion of the Vedas, you now and then find passages of most marvellous beauty. For instance, the famous sloka which describes chaos—  
'When darkness was hidden in darkness'. one reads and feels the wonderful sublimity of the poetry.. Mark the description of darkness by three poets. Take our own Kalidasa  
'Darkness which can be penetrated with the

point of a needle', then Milton—'No light but rather darkness visible', but come now to the Upanishad, 'Darkness was covering darkness', Darkness was hidden in darkness.<sup>8</sup>

It is highly significant that Vivekananda cites, in this statement, not only religious texts but also that by Kalidasa. In effect, even poetry written by individual poets, as distinct from the anonymous composers of the Vedas, is shot through with an irresistible urge to express the inexpressible.

When we approach western critics such as Coleridge we get theories of poetic creation which are of relevance in understanding Indian poetry too. Coleridge, for instance, stated that imagination is superior to fancy. Imagination idealizes the real object and ultimately universalizes it, while fancy only aggregates and makes a mechanical mixture of the impressions of sensory realities. According to Aristotle, poetry is not a mere imitation of reality, neither it is a photographic reproduction of what existed. But poetry is a product of creative imagination which 'gives to airy nothing—a local habitation and a name'. The midas-touch or the art of creating great beauty out of pure imagination, of turning the common objects into something transcendental, is basic to Indian poetry. Indian aesthetic experts like Ananda-vardhana and Abhinavagupta regarded literature (*Sāhitya*) as 'alaukika' which means transcendental. The entire range of Indian poetry right from the epics of Valmiki to the poems of Rabindranath Tagore has this basic transcendental quality, the feeling of the supersensory perception of the ultimate reality, in the midst of this sense-bound world.

Vivekananda also pointed out that the essential quality of art, whether it was in the realm of music, drama or any other form, is its capacity to bring about salvation. All art eventually leads to liberation. But Vivekananda points out that there is

7. *Complete Works* (1972) vol. 4, p. 384.

8. *Complete Works* (1973), vol. 3, pp. 329-30.

one condition: One must put one's whole soul into it. In other words, there must be total dedication. It is this holiness of art in general, and drama and poetry in particular, that Vivekananda highlights when he observed:

The drama, in India, was a very holy thing. Drama and music are themselves held to be religion. Any song—whether it be a love-song or otherwise—if one's whole soul is in that song, one attains salvation, one has nothing else to do. They say it leads to the same goal as meditation.<sup>9</sup>

Another significant aspect of Indian poetry—like poetry almost everywhere—is that in its earliest form it was meant to be sung. Even drama was originally instinct with the element of musicality. In fact, the artistic blending of the dramatic element with that of music is the basic structure of Indian poetic tradition. Even in the abstruse metaphysical explorations of the *Upanishads*, we notice the almost invariable presence of dialogue and the dramatic context. This aspect attained its culmination, for Vivekananda, in the *Bhagavad Gita*. He says:

The greatest incident of the war was the marvellous and immortal poem of the *Gita*, the *Song Celestial*.<sup>10</sup>

Vivekananda, with his profound insight into the dynamics of cultural contacts, pointed out an aspect of the Indian scriptures which has been studied by several oriental scholars in the west. This aspect is the global impact of Indian scriptures, specially the *Bhagavad Gita*. Its influence is evident in American writers such as Emerson. He found that the American Transcendentalists like Emerson and Thoreau were greatly influenced by the transcendental poetry of the *Gita* which

Carl T. Jackson has described as 'every Transcendentalist's favourite oriental reading'.<sup>11</sup> Without any hesitation, Vivekananda said:

If you want to know the source of Emerson's inspiration, it is this book, the *Gita*. He went to see Carlyle, and Carlyle made him a present of the *Gita*; and that little book is responsible for the Concord movement.<sup>12</sup>

This point is today confirmed by extensive researches into oriental religions carried out by eminent scholars. Carl T. Jackson, the American cultural historian, for instance, observes about Emerson's interest in Indian thought thus:

Obviously Emerson was deeply attracted by Asian thought or more precisely by the religious thought of India; whenever he spoke of Asia, he meant India. Though quite explicit about what he disliked in Indian religion—its 'endless ceremonial nonsense' and caste restrictions—his general attitude was overwhelmingly positive.<sup>13</sup>

Analysing the attraction, Jackson says that Emerson was drawn to Indian thought for three reasons: first, 'its mystical emphasis', which for Emerson 'subsumed the whole message in Hinduism'; second, the monism of Hindu thought; and finally 'the largeness, cosmic sweep and rich speculative powers of the Indian thought'.<sup>14</sup>

In the light of this, Vivekananda's views on the debt the thinkers of other nations owe to Indian thought is irrefutably clinched.

## II

In addition to commending on the literary heritage of India, Vivekananda

11. Carl T. Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought* (West Port, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981) p. 70.

12. *Complete Works* (1972) vol. 4, p. 95.

13. *The Oriental Religions and American Thought*, op. cit., p. 53.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

9. *Complete Works* (1972) vol. 4, p. 74.

10. *Ibid.*

also gave us seminal ideas on the function of language in the changed context of modern India. It is significant that not only was he a master of English prose and poetry but in the light of his familiarity with English he also wanted to bring about a radical transformation in his own mother-tongue and by implication all Indian languages, so that it becomes an effective vehicle for the communication of modern knowledge in diverse fields. Therefore, one side of Swami's significance so far as language is concerned lies in the fact that in the Parliament of Religions he was the most effectively articulate delegate. As Carl Jackson has pointed out:

Language was unquestionably a problem for most Asian delegates, handicapping their effectiveness in the Parliament. In the sizable Japanese delegation apparently Kinza Hirai and Zenshiro Noguchi had full command of English. On the other hand, Swami Vivekananda revealed unusual talents, demonstrating a fluent command of English, impressive stage manner, and gift for the memorable phrase, the Hindu spokesman was a sensation from his first address.<sup>15</sup>

The other side of his significance lies in what he thought should be done in Indian languages. About this he pointed out:

Your history, literature, mythology and all other Shastras are simply frightening people. Hence we must explain to men in simple words the highest ideas of the Vedas and the Vedanta.<sup>16</sup>

Vivekananda thus wanted language to be simple, direct, vigorous and original. In his opinion, apart from a 'common religion' there should be a 'common language' for uniting the peoples of India. He rightly thought that this common language cannot be thrust upon the people from above but should be a 'mother language' which has its roots in all the

languages of India, and because of its own superiority, suitability, and effectiveness it will become the all-India language. He considered Sanskrit to be the most suitable language for the purpose.

As Vivekananda has pointed out, the Sanskrit of the Vedas was highly terse, technical and scholastic. But the Puranic Sanskrit was simpler, ready for the common man's conversation and understanding. This Sanskrit was the spoken language of the common people in the ancient times. Hence the Puranas and the Epics received impressive popular appreciation. Vivekananda said:

Puranas were written to popularise the religion of the Vedas. The Puranas were written in the language of the people of that time, what we call modern Sanskrit. The sages made use of these things to illustrate the eternal principles of religion.<sup>17</sup>

It is interesting that Vivekananda endorses the use of simple language by using analogues drawn from our own culture and language. Here we can notice an outstanding feature of his basic structure of thinking. All innovation, if it is to be effective, should be derived from and defined in terms of the enduring elements of tradition. Though the initial inspiration for change can come from any source, this change, according to Vivekananda, should be effected only through the logic of indigenous tradition. In this sense we can say that Vivekananda is a prophet comparable to the seers of the Upanishads. He belonged to them and the rishis of the Upanishads who could feel the presence of the Divine in all men high or low, the presence of the Ultimate One in the immanent universe of senses. With prophetic vision he could see essential and infinite power inside all beings. There-

15. Ibid., p. 249.

16. *Complete Works* (1972) vol. 7, p. 171.

17. *Complete Works* (1973) vol. 3, p. 121.

fore, his poems and views on literature and language are positive in tone and as such sources of endless inspiration to all. He said:

We must give the public only positive ideas. Negative ideas weaken men. In language and literature, in poetry and the arts, in everything we must point out not the mistakes that people are making in their thoughts and actions, but the way in which they will gradually be able to do these things better.<sup>18</sup>

The prophets expressed the highest ideas of God realization in the simplest of languages for common man. Vivekananda found in Ramakrishna, his Master, such a prophet. Explaining the implications of Ramakrishna's advent, for language, Vivekananda says:

Simplicity is the secret. My ideal of language is my Master's language, most colloquial and yet most expressive. It must express the thought which is intended to be conveyed.<sup>19</sup>

This is indeed, a very significant idea which needs scrutiny. Normally, we think of the influence of incarnations of God as confined to, or to be located mainly in, areas of ethics and spirituality. But here is Ramakrishna who, almost an unlettered man, is heralding, as it were, a linguistic revolution. The language Sri Ramakrishna spoke is the simplest; yet from the point of view of metaphor and image it is extraordinarily suggestive—instinct with a vast range of meaning. His parables, for instance, which have simplicity but a depth of meaning and a range of metaphor, are easily comparable to the parables of Jesus and Buddha. This is the model which Vivekananda felt should be used in bringing about modernity to language. Like Buddha and Jesus, Ramakrishna, too,

spoke in the rural patois. The eternal truths of religion expressed in simple language became available to all. The implicit democratization of language has found in India wide acceptance in our century—an acceptance which has resulted in the Renaissance of Indian languages.

Sri Ramakrishna's language was homely, picturesquely worded and they always had a 'very real and touching spiritual beauty'. To people all over, they were Gospels, spelling out God. His knowledge came out as Max Muller said 'in spontaneous outbursts of profound wisdom clothed in beautiful language'. And just this simple language of Sri Ramakrishna carried the profoundest of truths. Today the entire world accepts his words as the symbol of highest spiritual message for humanity. Vivekananda's American disciple, Josephine Macleod wrote (on 26.12.39):

The Chicago Swami sent me a card saying the new 'world Bible', just issued of 1400 pages, begins with six sentences of Ramakrishna. Isn't it interesting to learn that 50 years after Ramakrishna's death, his great message should lead the world's Bible? Of course, it was Swamiji, who caused this great new prophet's message to come from Bengal—and be known everywhere where English is spoken.<sup>20</sup>

Vivekananda was not the one to rest content with the formulation of ideas, plans and programmes. His dynamic nature demanded the creation of moulds which concretize these ideas. He wanted to give a local habitation and a name to his ideas. No wonder that to propagate Ramakrishna's liberating ideas and at the same time make Bengali language acquire the contours of modernity he started the Bengali monthly 'Udbodhan' which con-

18. *Complete Works* (1972) vol. 7, p. 170.

19. *Complete Works* (1973) vol. 5, p. 259.

20. Shankari Prasad Basu, *Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatavarsa* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Mondal Book House, 1976) vol. 2, p. 293.

tinues to do this job with vigour and vitality even to this day. Its aim was and is to make language simple, forceful and yet profound in thought and content. Spelling out the implicit ideas Vivekananda said:

We must mould the ideas, language, and everything in a new fashion—Not only must we give out Sri Ramakrishna's ideas to all, but we must also introduce a new vigour into the Bengali language. For instance, the frequent use of verbs diminishes the force of a language. We must restrict the use of verbs by the use of adjectives.<sup>21</sup>

Vivekananda's celebrated writing on Bengali language is an eye-opener in this respect. He completely rejected the old classical style of Bengali with bombastic and high sounding adjectives and complex syntaxes. In addition, he wanted to infuse heroism, dynamism, the spirit of upanishadic strength, the deep and sombre cadence of the Dhrupad music instead of the sentimental music of Thumri and light lyrics. The celebrated artist Nandalal Bose, asked to comment on Vivekananda's artistic stature, has pointed out in a letter to Vivekananda's brother, Bhupendranath Datta:

It is my impression that as the Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, etc. by lecturing in colloquial languages of their days gave them a place in contemporary literature, and made the literature, intelligible to the people, likewise Swamijee led the Bengalee language in that direction. Swamiji has made the Bengalee language energetic and full of life. He has strongly criticised the intricacy and mannerism of art. Following his

message, the art of the future will be again simpler, as well as full of life, and forceful.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding Vivekananda's Bengalee book *Prachya O Paschatya*, the eminent poet Rabindranath Tagore has pointed out advising the famous Bengalee historian of literature Dinesh Chandra Sen to read it:

How colloquial Bengalee can appear as a living and forceful language, you will realize after reading it. Such ideas, such language, similarly such penetrating liberal vision, and the ideal of synthesis between the East and the West that this book contains, is surprising to one.<sup>23</sup>

This book is now regarded as an outstanding contribution to modern Bengalee language and literature. As Swami Vedananda says:

It has been an unparalleled presentation of Swamiji to Bengalee literature. It will not be an exaggeration to say that it is rare to find another such book in Bengalee literature.<sup>24</sup>

Language reflects the spirit of the whole race, Vivekananda asserted. And, therefore, a rising India must reflect the spirit of enthusiasm, optimism, action and confidence in all her languages. This was Vivekananda's ideas of the languages of India. Even his own English is extremely modern and according to the contemporary Englishmen of Vivekananda's days, his language was more chastened and powerful than the best English speakers of England.

22. Bhupendranath Datta, *Swami Vivekananda—Patriot Prophet* (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1954) p. 310

23. Ibid., pp. 293-4.

24. Ibid., p. 293.

21. *Complete Works* (1972) vol. 7, p. 168.

## BARANAGORE MATH AND ITS IDEALISM

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

Sri Ramakrishna was the rarest type of spiritual genius who ever came to the world. He was a God-intoxicated man with manifold spiritual experiences. He was an enigmatic personality—deep as the ocean, wide as the blue sky, forbearing as mother earth, lofty as the mountain, and soothing as the rays of the morning sun. Having direct and authentic experiences of Reality, he said, 'I clearly see that God has become everything.' He looked upon man as God, for a human being is not really a physical being, a body-mind complex only. Really he is a divine being encased in a body. The goal of human life, according to Sri Ramakrishna, is to have freedom, *moksha*. In India, great philosophers, from the Vedic age down to our own age, have interpreted history as the progress of the Spirit toward its goal, which is freedom from bondage.

Sri Ramakrishna was very eager to share his rare spiritual experiences with humanity for its benefit. Having that genuine passion to serve the people through his spiritual wisdom, he used to say, 'I would indeed feel blessed if by assuming a thousand births I can liberate one single soul' (recorded in the Minutes of the R. K. Mission, Aug. 29/1897). Through his intuition he knew about Narendranath's greatness of spiritual personality, and therefore he expressly commissioned Narendranath to be the leader of his young disciples, and commanded him to take care of them. He clearly told him, 'I leave them to your care. See that they practise spiritual disciplines and do not return home' (*Life of Swami Vivekananda*, by Eastern & Western Disciples, p. 132). He also gave them *gerua* cloth and *rudraksha* beads, and asked them to get food through begging.

'Thus it was that the disciples were initiated into monastic order by the Master himself and the foundation of the future Ramakrishna Order was laid' (*Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Mayavati, p. 493). He had tremendous faith in Narendranath; also he knew that Narendranath would 'remove the miseries of mankind'. Sri Ramakrishna, the Master, also wrote on a piece of paper, 'Naren will teach others.' Upon Narendranath's refusal, the Master said with all his force and authority, 'Your very bones will do it'. He also transmitted his spiritual power to Naren and said, 'By the force of the power transmitted by me great things will be done by you; only after that you will go to whence you came' (*Life of Swami Vivekananda*, op. cit., p. 148). The Master passed away on August 16, 1886.

The young disciples of the Master, numbering sixteen, were homeless. At the initiative of Naren and with the financial help of Surendranath Mitra, a devotee of the Master, a dilapidated house at Baranagore was rented for a monastery in September 1886. The description of the Math was given by Kali Krishna—later Virajananda—who was the first person to join the Math at the age of 18, in 1891. 'The interior of the Math's ground floor, having been unoccupied for a long time, was full of wild plants and shrubs. It had become a haven for jackals and reptiles and no one would go there out of fear. It was said that many years ago numerous murders were committed in the house. The structure was known as the "haunted house" and no one would live in it. That was why the *sadhus* in the Math were able to rent it for only Rs. 10 a month' (*The Story of an Epoch*, p. 19). The Master's love bound them together and their



minds had been opened to a new vista of thought—thought of inner illumination. The Master had firmly planted the living seed of spirituality in their hearts. They became possessed of deep faith about the reality of spiritual bliss and they staked everything for that high purpose of life. Notwithstanding the abject poverty and other inconveniences of life, they struggled hard to enter into the inner sanctuaries of their souls through their sheer strength of character, manliness, and purity of vision.

They were never exclusive ; being trained by the Master, they maintained their liberal attitude throughout. The Master used to say, 'One should not think "My religion is the right path and other religions are false" '. As many views, so many paths. God can be realized by following any path provided the seeker is sincere.

In every epoch a few men have formed into a nucleus of Light ; men who can be called the messengers of God. The individual person is something entirely peculiar and mystic, not in the biological or psychological or social sense, but in the spiritual sense. Man in his essence is divine. This invisible, non-physical ingredient in man, the real self of life, is the storehouse of all powers and excellences. Once man is able to tap his divine energy, he will be free from bondage and misery. These disciples of the Master at this Math were to vindicate the glory, majesty and dignity of divine life. The manifestation of inner strength through spiritual practice is the peg on which hangs the entire future of life and civilization. It is not only the most original contribution of this group in recent times, but also very pragmatic and hence of momentous importance. It does help us to reshape our destiny by deepening our spiritual consciousness.. It affords us the greatest consolation in suffering. Hence, we find that the divinity of man and his spiritual development occupies the most

pivotal position, as it alone makes us really happy. Upon this rock of spiritual insight the entire philosophy of the Ramakrishna Order was clearly spelled out by Swamiji: 'First, let us be Gods, and then help others to be Gods. Be and make. Let this be our motto' (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 4, p. 297). Swami Vivekananda was never tired of exhorting the glory of divine life. To focus our attention in our inner divinity and to carry the struggle to manifest it is a clarion call of Swamiji to one and all. Every genuine attempt to help humanity in all spheres of life has to accept this most important point of inner growth which makes other growth possible. It is man's idea of man that determines the attitude of life, and it is this attitude of life that shapes his future. Hence, man's idea of man is very vital for the growth of civilization and its continuity. 'The same Greek idea of man, which accounts for Greek civilization's rise and culmination, is also the explanation of its strange and tragic fate. Hellenism was betrayed by what was false within it' (*The Ancient Mediterranean View of Man*, Arnold J. Toynbee, pp. 3-4).

This monastic movement had certain unique features. This group was all educated and came from respectable families. They used to practise various disciplines without becoming narrow and parochial. Religion has to be lived rather than talked about. 'My mission is to show that religion is everything and in everything' (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 5, p. 132). By having this broadest view of religion, this group emancipated religion from distortion and unhealthy associations resulting from primitive superstitions, idolatry, etc. They lived life in tune with the Spirit and through their example they extolled the beauty of religion as a liberating force for man in the highest sense of the term. In their



catholic outlook they encompassed every valid tradition. Having intimate knowledge of the unity of existence, this brotherhood, following Sri Ramakrishna's vision, took upon themselves the privilege of serving the world by looking upon everyone as a manifestation of the Divine. There was no dichotomy between the spiritual and the mundane.

Hence, this brotherhood of monks headed by Swami Vivekananda, gave the human mind a sense of higher direction, which was explained in his motto of the Order in later years as, 'For the liberation of one's self and for the good of the world.' The essence of Vedanta was practised in every-day life. They infused dynamism in every aspect of life. 'Service to man is service to God' became a redemptive gospel for the regeneration of humanity.

'The power of thought,' says Bertrand Russell in his *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, 'in the long run is greater than any other human power.' In all great epochs of history, such great illumined souls who move men, move the world for absolute peace and security. 'The only real revolution is in the enlightenment of the mind and the improvement of character; the only real emancipation is individual and the only real revolutionists are philosophers and saints' (*The Lesson of History*, by Will and Ariel Durant, p. 72). History is mainly 'a collection of crimes, follies and misfortunes' of mankind. This is the view of Saint Augustine, Voltaire, Gibbon and many others. Rightly, Thomas Carlyle says in his *Sartor Resartus*, 'Perhaps the most remarkable incident in modern history is not... the Battle of Austerlitz, Waterloo, Peterloo, or any other battle, but an incident

passed carelessly over by most Historians, and treated with some degree of ridicule by others; namely, George Fox's making to himself a suit of Leather. This man, the first of the Quakers, and by trade a shoemaker, was one of those to whom, under purer or ruder form, the Divine Idea of the Universe is pleased to manifest itself, and... who are therefore rightly accounted prophets, God-possessed.'

Baranagore Math was indeed a spiritual laboratory where they did superhuman struggle to discover their inner divinity. This search for higher values of life was never noted by history. They were unknown till the advent of Swami Vivekananda in the West. A spiritually inspired minority alone is capable of creating a new wave of enthusiasm in the racial consciousness. They act as saviours of the race by projecting the abiding values of the Spirit as opposed to the values of the flesh, which fails to rouse our emotion. Baranagore Math under the leadership of Swami Vivekananda gave the Nation the fruits of their spiritual insight. A comprehensive message of life was given to the people who found his total view of life very inspiring. It was spiritually satisfying, intellectually justifying and emotionally inspiring. The nation was stirred to its very depth and followed him. 'The great man of the age,' says Hegel, 'is one who can put into words the will of his age, tell his age what its will is, and accomplish it. What he does is the heart and essence of his age; he actualizes his age' (*What is History?*, by E. H. Carr, p. 48).

In this Centenary celebration of the Ramakrishna Order, we pay our respectful homage to the heroes of the Spirit who created history at Baranagore Math.

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

### FLY ONWARD, O BIRD

Recently the *Prabuddha Bharata* editorial office received an invitation card from one of our Centres in U.S.A., the Vedanta Society of Northern California. It is a general invitation to the spiritual sessions for the month of February 1987 and to the celebration of Shivaratri, the night dedicated to the Lord Shiva. There is nothing new in the lecture schedules. But what immediately impressed the reader was the back page of the card where a full poem of Jalal al-Din Rumi was quoted. The poem is 'Fly Onward'.

Why does the spirit not fly to its home, when the voice of the Divine Majesty is heard, with a fair message to the soul, saying: 'Ascend'?

How should the fish not spring swiftly into the water from the dry land, when it hears the sound of the waves from the limpid sea?

Why should a falcon not leave its prey and fly toward the King, when it hears the call to return, from drum and drumstrap?

Why, like a mote in the sunbeams, should not every Sufi begin to shine forth in the sunshine of immortality that it may snatch him away from mortality?

He gives such grace, beauty, and newness of life, that he who turns aside from Him brings affliction on himself and is in error.

Fly, fly onward, O bird, toward the abode whence thou didst come, for thou hast gone forth from thy cage and thy wings are spread forth: make thy journey from the brackish water to the water of life.

Return toward the spirit's home, from the place to which thou didst enter in. Go on thy way, O soul, for we also are coming from this world of separation to that world of union.

Until when, like children, shall we fill

our skirt with dust, stones, and potsherds, in this earthly world? Let us leave the dust alone and let us fly toward the heavenly places.

—Jalal al-Din Rumi  
Sufi mystic, 13th Century

Ramakrishnites, or the followers of Ramakrishna Vedanta could do that. This respect for seers, for mystics, for the realized souls anywhere in the world, is spontaneous with them. They respond to wherever there is a genuine message for the realization of our innate divinity. This small poem is an incantation which they would sing in joy.

The message is the eternal message—'Fly, fly onward, O bird'. This is the message of which the Upanisads repeatedly reminded us—*cara eva iti*—fare forward, O striving soul, this is the only message for you.

This is the same message of Bergsonian dynamism which one scarlet evening Tagore heard in the restless flight of the white cranes over the tall poplars of Jhelum in Kashmir—'Not here, not here, somewhere, somewhere else'. In the same mood he cried out once again to the little bird in us, struggling alone at night to reach the other shore of the ocean. 'Yet dear bird, dear bird of mine, do not close thy wings now, though the way is enveloped in darkness.'

Human beings throughout the ages have struggled to reach the realm of absolute freedom of the Self. 'Freedom, freedom is the song of my soul', used to say Vivekananda. The constant refrain of Buddha was 'wander alone like a rhinoceros, like a lion breaking the fetters of the cage, like the wind unarrested by the leaves'. The

ever-free souls, Sri Ramakrishna used to say, are like those Homa birds which are conceived and born in the sky. The egg gets hatched while falling from the mother's womb, the little bird comes out, and when it sees itself rushing towards an impending death on the hard ground, it flies back to its home, the 'Spirit's home', as Rumi says. It knows how to live in the heaven of perpetual freedom unspoiled by the least touch of the superincumbent world. Such birds are the archetypal symbols of spiritual freedom. There is in all of us, 'the unlimited sea gull', as Jonathan Seagall heard from within. The Skylark, of the English romantic poets and the *Shaheen* of Sufi poets are such symbols of the ever-free spirit of man, struggling and escaping from the thousand meshes of the body-mind complex. Says the *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* (4.3.18): 'As a hawk or a falcon flying variously in the sky is exhausted and stretching its wings directs itself towards its nest only, even so does this infinite entity hasten to the state where falling asleep it seeks no desire and sees no dream.'

The song of Shelley's Skylark is incomparably sweeter than all the 'chorus hymeneal' or the 'triumphal chant' 'wherein we feel that there is some hidden want'. The Skylark's unfettered flight in the infinity of the sky is a symphony in itself, a reflection of the Absolute Bliss (Ananda) of the Self in us. Standing on the sea-shore of Pisa, Shelley wrote:

Higher still and higher  
From the earth thou springest  
Like a cloud of fire  
The blue deep thou singest  
And singing still dost soar and soaring  
ever singest.

The falcon's fight in boundless freedom, like the tempestuous movement of the west wind, is also a grim reminder to us of our helpless finitude and iron bondages of life of which Shelley wrote:

I fall upon the thorns of life, I bleed  
A heavy weight of hours has chained  
one, too, like thee...

This fear of bondage lingers in Rumi's mind, too. He entreats the spiritual seeker never to return to the 'dust' and 'stones' of 'this earthly world' 'which may snatch him away from the sunshine of immortality'. We are reminded again, of Sri Ramakrishna's story of the woodcutter and the holy man. The holy man asked the woodcutter to go ahead and never stop. He went ahead and found forests of sandal wood. He became rich. Yet he did not stop. The holy man asked him never to stop even when all the wealth of the world was attained. He never ceased to go ahead until he reached the infinitude of wealth and bliss.

This little invitation card is inspiring. It inflames our drooping spirit with a new hope and dynamism. Why not give a fresh start to our quest. Who knows when the heaven would be at our doorsteps? The poem has got a touch of Ramakrishna's passionate cry to humanity, his dear children—Realize God. Realize God. Nothing else matters. That is the greatest aim of this puny little life of ours in the 'vast vale of tears', this *samsaric* existence, his endless cycle of desires and unfulfilment, birth and death. Move on. Movement is life. He who moves, gets. This heaven-ward flight of the falcon is a foretaste of that Freedom, that final liberation from all slavery, which is the goal of our life.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S DAKSHINESWAR:** EDITED BY PRAVRAJKA ATMAPRANA. Published by Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, C-8A, Hauz Khas, New Delhi 110 016. 1986. Pp. x + 79. Rs. 30.

*Sri Ramakrishna's Dakshineswar* is a literary pilgrimage to the holy precincts of Dakshineswar blessed and deified by the historic life and sadhana of Sri Ramakrishna, the God of this age. It is also a meditation on those spots hallowed by the radiating divinity and spiritual quest of the latest incarnation of God on this earth. As the readers turn the pages and look at the kaleidoscopic series of coloured photographs of the village they take a visionary flight to those halcyon days and live for some time with the simple, child-like God-man inviting you to make the same pilgrimage to Godhead, he himself had made a century ago.

The preface of this beautiful book of 79 pages sets forth the objective, 'Devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, too, would love to follow his footprints as he lived in Dakshineswar for thirty years. Sri Ramakrishna is a vast book; Dakshineswar is only a chapter, but a very important one. So an attempt has been made in this book to capture the rarefied spiritual atmosphere of the Dakshineswar temple garden and the surrounding area as it was in his times.' The book, in fact, is a spiritual quest to Ramakrishna's Dakshineswar. The importance of this quest is brought forth powerfully in the foreword by Pravrajika Mokshaprana, the President Mataji of Sri Sarada Math: 'At Dakshineswar Sri Ramakrishna's sadhana was an all-inclusive endeavour for the emancipation of all beings—an emancipation which did not leave out even a single living creature, however lowly it may be. No person in the history of the world had made such an endeavour. He is the Dakshina-Iswar, a kind-hearted God.'

The Kali temple of Dakshineswar is the fulfilment of a divine dream. The devout Rani Rasmani's mind was all full of enthusiasm and delight at the prospect of the holy pilgrimage she was going to make to Venares. But the night before the journey, Mother Kali intervened. She appeared to the Rani in a dream and said, 'There is no need to go to Kaashi. Install my image in a beautiful spot on the bank of the Ganga and arrange for my daily worship and food offering; I shall manifest myself in the

image and accept your worship daily.' (p. 3). The temple's history is fascinating: 'A part of the piece of land selected by the Rani at Dakshineswar belonged to an Englishman. In the other part of the land there was an abandoned Muslim burial ground, associated with the memory of a Mohammedan holy man. The piece of land had the shape of the back of a tortoise.' 'The construction of the temple started in 1847 and was completed in eight years at the expense of nine hundred thousand rupees'. (p. 5).

The name of the deity in the main temple is given as 'Sri Sri Jagadiswari Mahakali', although popularly She is known as 'Bhavatarini' (p. 8). It is here that Sri Ramakrishna one day withdrew himself from the 'conventional society' and plunged into sadhana for the vision of God in the deity. After this vision was obtained by means of a death defying passion, in the same temple compound he made his next journey to the different aspects of God through all the avenues of creeds and religions. Here he did his sufi Islamic sadhana. Here he had the vision of Christ. Here under the Panchavati and in the secluded jungle of the temple garden he had the visions of Sita, Hanuman, Rama, Lakshman, Radha, Krishna, Sri Chaitanya and other divine forms. Again, it is here on the steps of the Ganga that the brass image of Ramalala became living and swam with him. Here his gurus Totapuri and Bhairavi taught him. Here saints, scholars, devotees, seekers, the fallen ones, the aristocrats, and the commoners would throng like bees to drink the nectar of God from him.

The attractive part of the book is its photographs. The visual images help the reader at once in the spiritual pilgrimage. In total there are in this small book 33 plates (30 in colour and 3 in black and white).

The names of different chapters are: 'The Divine Will', 'Within the Holy Courtyard', 'The Kuthi, the Nahabat and the Room', 'The Divine Playground', 'Gurus in Succession', 'My Life in Dakshineswar (in the words of Sri Sarada Devi)', 'In Dakshineswar (in the words of Swami Vivekananda)', 'When the Lotus Blooms Bees Come', 'With Sri Ramakrishna in Dakshineswar', and 'In and Around Dakshineswar'. With each chapter most of the important incidents associated with the life of Sri Rama-

krishna are put forth along with the running narrative. Most of these incidents are taken from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*. About the room of Sri Ramakrishna we are reminded: 'Thus in the room and out on the verandahs Sri Ramakrishna moved about leisurely, making the place a centre of spiritual power to bring enlightenment to many. Speaking about the room he said one day, "There has been much chanting of the Lord's name in the room. That is why the atmosphere has become so intense".'

Even minor details and anecdotes associated with places in and around Dakshineswar are respectfully portrayed. Some of the information regarding the historical evolution of the village are quite new. Even those who are born and brought up in the village may not know about them.

Memories of countless incidents during the period of sadhana, years of divine ecstasy, of the blissful gathering of devotees in the presence of the Master, and especially memories of silent but intense tapas of Holy Mother inside the small Nahabat crowd our minds as we go through the pages. When the circumambulation round the holy village is over through the pages of this small book, we feel like M., 'Each particle of dust in Dakshineswar is holy, animate and living, because of the touch of Bhagavan's holy feet. The trees, the creepers, *devarshis* and *bhaktas* of this place are all standing to witness and enjoy the nectar of the play of Sri Bhagavan. They are all a witness to the play of the Avatar.'

The cover invites you to step down from the boat of your pilgrimage on the holy steps of Dakshineswar temple. The various photographs take you round the village. As you go on reading, you live in Dakshineswar and live with Ramakrishna, the kind-hearted God--the Dakshina Iswar, whose touch had transformed every brick of the temple garden into gold. When we close the book we feel closer to the dear God as he liked to live in his much-beloved temple precincts.

Dakshineswar is the Sakti-pitha of this age, where Ramakrishna had aroused the 'Brahma-Kundalini' of the universe, as Swami Vivekananda said. It is here that Ramakrishna had worshipped Mother Kali in the temple, and in his own wife, the eternally pure Holy Mother Sarada Devi, as the visible manifestation of the same Cosmic Mother Power of the Universe. Here the same Mother Power, the great,

purifying and spiritual power of this age was manifested in its fullness through the body of Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Sarada Math's publication of this book is significant. It will help establish the glory and power of Dakshineswar-on-the-Ganga in the world map and inspire the veneration which the Christians feel for Jerusalem-on-the-Jordan and Muslims feel for Mecca and Medina or the Buddhists for Bodh-Gaya and Saranath.

S.J

**GITA ENLIGHTENED:** By YOGI MAHAJAN. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U.A., Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007. 1986 Pp. 117. Cloth Rs. 75 and paper Rs. 50

Scholars and specialists may study the Vedas and Upanishads but Gita and Ramayana are scriptures for the common millions. Gita has been translated into 75 languages of the world and there are over 2000 translations of it (apart from local versions by many Gurus and Sadhus for their own coterie). It is the most translated book in the world, second only to the Bible (chiefly due to the power of their world-wide Empire). There is a Persian translation by Dara Shikoh (brother of Aurangzeb) and another by Abul Fazal.

The present work authored by Yogi Mahajan is the exposition of the ideas on the subject by his spiritual preceptor, Her Holiness Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi.

Pandits and priests preach lofty ideals, they say, but their personal lives often reveal contrary to what they preach. Shri Mataji is a realized soul, whose preachings are her personal practices over the long year. (Gandhiji said that his translation or interpretation of Gita was based on his and his Ashramites' practice for 40 years).

Gita is the gospel of full-blooded action, desireless action, action without attachment or personal ego. The writer translates the famous Shloka epitomizing the central idea of the Gita in these words:

'Do thy work but let there be no attachment to the fruits of action. Let the reward not be the motive. Nor fall into the state of inaction.'

Work is life, work is joy. Happiness is a by-product of over-busyness. Nature fills one's empty time with disease, worry and fears. An over-worked person has no time to whine, to fall

ill, even to die. One who is busy in any work however pointless is happy; he who does work for his own betterment or welfare is happier; while he who is working for the good of others feels the happiest. Happiness means self-forgetfulness, that comes through total absorption in some worthwhile activity. That work is best done, when the whole care is about the work, with no thought of the result or fruit to disturb efficient performance. As Gandhiji says he who has an eye on the fruit loses the nerve to perform the task. The writer gives the example of a woman doing the cooking. If all the time, she is thinking of how her cookeries would or would not please whom, she diffuses her attention on the cooking job and the quality suffers. Or take another example. Cricketers on the score of 90 plus often get out, for the thought of the coming century diffuses their concentration on the present ball. Or take another example. the hare runs faster than the hounds, but they always catch it. Why? It again and again looks back to see the outcome—the fruit. Nor is a person doing his best with no thought for the outcome or fruit a loser. As Gandhiji says, he reaps ten times more (the exception is the pretender who uses this pose to gain ten times more).

One merit of this work is that the writer is refreshingly frank, no inhibition in the interest of Mahatmaship. Says he, the author of Gita was Veda Vyasa, who was an illegitimate child of a fisherwoman (a Shudra). Orthodoxy would slur over such a matter. Or again, Janak was a man of action, (ruling over a kingdom, sitting on a golden throne). His example negates the practices of ascetic orders, who seek enlightenment through renunciation of work. 'Escapism is not renunciation. Retiring to a mountain cave or changing the colour of clothes does not bring realisation. For the egoless one there is nothing to renounce.'

The writer (or Great She beyond) is no kill-joy, out of tune with life and laughter. Says he: 'A realised person is bubbling with laughter. He does not know how to control his laughter or how to hide his joy. Meditation is the art of rejoicing in life; it is for life, not anti-life (no mourning philosopher this).

Again there is no touch of fanaticism or exclusiveness.

All want to reach the top. There are many routes to it. All Prophets illuminated one or the other aspects of the divine. No single

Prophet revealed everything. Hence to come to terms with reality, a Hindu must know the message of Muhammad, of Christ, of Buddha—and vice versa'. This is cosmopolitan religion, suited to the space age.

There are hordes of bogus Gurus around, some exported too (Mataji is a genuine realized soul). 'To ensure clientele, fake Gurus say exotic things about meditation'. Their sayings are so obscure (and confused) that the ignorant think they must be very profound.

Or again, 'Somebody has the power to produce ash out of hand, or Swiss watches from the air and you are enchanted—sold. These enchantments lead you astray.'

Reference to a rival Guru is too transparent; perhaps there is professional competition even at the top.

Ego is the cause of all our trouble. Even Radha is jealous of the flute (Bansuri), as it is in touch with Krishna's lips. It has no ego, it lets the Master play on it any tune that He pleases. So that egoless man is happy, who bows his head to the will of God, whatever destiny, He sends.

The author laments, 'Even today, the fanatic devils are, in the Name of God, working out their Satanic plans to destroy the peace—of the world. Either they are on the ego trip to destroy others, or on a super ego nonsense to destroy themselves'.

'God', says the Gita, 'lives in the heart of all beings'. Life's goal is self-realization or realizing that God within. A separated drop (soul) dries up and is miserable, if remerged in the ocean (Cosmic Force of God), it has the feel of Eternity. That is all Bliss. Ignorant man (and that's nearly the whole humanity) is like the blind philosopher, searching in the dark room for the black cat, that is not there.

Freud, according to the author, is a half-baked intellectual, who reduced all humans to sex points. Western world has accepted his thesis as gospel 'as if he were greater than Christ, because he supported human failings and human weaknesses.'

Arjuna said, 'O Lord Supreme, I yearn to see Thy Divine Form'. Krishna gave him the Divine Eye to see and told him that countless heads, arms, chests etc were the image of God; meaning humanity is God and that the service of human beings is the true service of God.

This work is not the dry-as-dust treatise, as



a religion-based book is expected to be. Rather it makes pleasurable reading. Some of its pointed sentences can be Quotable Quotes; for instance:

'Nothing comes from nothing, it never can. You have to lose something to gain everything'.

'After every five days, the donkey puts on the wings of a bird' (referring to weekend holidaying in the west)

'Look at flowers, they are dying tomorrow, but every minute they live they are emitting fragrance to you'.

'The current of life flows. It never looks back.'

P. D. SHASTRI, M.A. (double) M.O.L (Sanskrit)  
*Emeritus Professor of Divinity and Retd. Vice-Principal of Government College, Chandigarh.*

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA VRINDABAN

#### REPORT FOR APRIL 1985 TO MARCH 1986

Begun in 1907 as a small homoeopathic dispensary the Sevashrama has now grown into a 121-bed allopathic hospital and an important monastic centre. The hospital has departments of general surgery, ophthalmology, general medicine and a homoeopathic outpatient clinic. The general surgery department performs a wide variety of operations, having a neurosurgeon also among its staff. Facilities exist for conducting electrocardiography, radiography, physiotherapy and laboratory tests. An 8-bed ward is provided for cancer patients. The emergency department is a boon to the public, conducting medical and surgical service round the clock. A well-equipped eye department is a special feature of this hospital. The Pallimangal (Integrated Rural Development) scheme has been rendering free service to the poor people of 150 villages in Mathura district. The nursing school, which has been functioning since 1980 offers a 3-year course in nursing and admits 10 students every year. As a part of the training in the nursing school and also for the benefit of the people of the area the maternity service has been started since 14.1.86.

During the period under report, the Sevashrama treated 2,12,844 outpatients (new: 43,276) all of whom received free consultation and medicines. The number of inpatients treated was 3,188 of whom 31% received free treatment which was subsidized to the extent of 75% for the rest of them. The number of surgical operations conducted in the hospital was 581. A total number of 50,329 patients (new 30,621) were treated under the Pallimangal (integrated rural

development scheme) all of whom received consultation and medicines free.

Besides medical service the Sevashrama has made permanent arrangements for supplying drinking water through taps fixed on the Sevashrama boundary wall on the main road side to the people and also from a big trough to the cattle. The Sevashrama provides shelter on temporary basis to sadhus and Vaishnavas in its old buildings. It provided free stationery to 416 poor students, helped the poor through financial assistance, and by providing clothings etc.

*Immediate needs:* It should be noted that the Sevashrama does not ask for or receive any financial help from the government for the maintenance of the hospital and depends solely on the help received from the benevolent public. A donation of Rs. 50,000 towards the maintenance of a hospital-bed may be made as an endowment in memory of someone. Donations may also be made for any of the items mentioned under *Future Plans* given below. The immediate need is to buy certain essential equipment and to wipe out the accumulated deficit of Rs. 2,49,186.87 (as on 31.3.86).

#### *Future Plans:*

##### *A. Construction:*

1. Intensive care unit with attached laboratory etc. : Rs. 2,75,000
2. Modifications in operating room complex and wards : Rs. 1,00,000
3. Completion of hospital roof : Rs. 1,50,000
4. Staff quarters : Rs. 3,00,000
5. Maternity Block : Rs. 10,00,000



**B. Equipment:**

1. Ceiling operation lamp	Rs. 40,000
2. Some essential instruments for general, orthopedic, ENT, ophthalmology and neuro surgery departments	Rs. 1,94,000
3. Operating microscopes	Rs. 2,00,000
4. Spectrophotoflurometer, automatic slide-staining machine, refractometer, blood gas analyser, electronic cell counter, electrophoresis unit, slide counter	Rs. 3,12,000
5. Angiomat 3000 Viamonte-Hobbs injector	Rs. 3,00,000
6. Florobrite Tri Mode cesium iodide image-intensifier with TV	Rs. 5,00,000
7. For Maternity Department	Rs. 5,00,000
8. For Intensive Care Unit: central monitoring cardio-scope, defibrillator, pace-makers etc. for 8 beds	Rs. 6,00,000

9. For Laundry : Rs. 2,70,000

**C. Endowments**

Endowments for maintenance, purchasing of medicines and other requisites for Pallimangal (Integrated Rural Development) work	Rs. 5,00,000
For 39 beds	: Rs. 19,50,000
For hospital maintenance fund	: Rs. 42,30,692
For building maintenance	: Rs. 1,99,250
For Goseva fund (dairy)	: Rs. 1,64,228
For land development fund	: Rs. 1,00,000
For hospital development fund	: Rs. 4,77,800
For School of nursing	: Rs. 3,02,800
For maternity department	: Rs. 11,00,000
For hospital movable properties fund	: Rs. 10,00,000
For general relief and welfare fund	: Rs. 1,00,000
For Mission workers' fund	: Rs. 5,00,000

## PRABUDDHA BHARATA: 90 YEARS AGO

Vol. 1, No. 11

MADRAS, MAY 1897

Published Monthly

### JNANA YOGA

(Class lectures delivered in America)

By

Swami Vivekananda

No. 1, Sadhanas or Preparations

(Concluded)

A pure heart sees beyond the intellect, it gets inspired; it knows things that reason can never know, and whenever there is conflict between the pure heart and the intellect always side with the pure heart, even if you think what your heart is doing is unreasonable. Reasoning will come later on. Even though it may be every instant desiring to do good to the poor, and your brain may tell you that it is not politic to help these poor men, yet follow your heart, and you will find that you make less error than by following your intellect. The pure heart is the best mirror for the reflection of truth, so all these disciplines are purifying the heart, and as soon as it is pure all truths flash upon it in a minute, all truth in the universe will be there in your heart if you are sufficiently pure.

\* \* \* \* \*

### HARIH, OM

(The Skandopanishad of the Yajur Veda)

The Peace Chant

Om! May He protect us both, may He be pleased with us; may we develop strength, illumined may our studies be. May there be no dispute.

Om! Peace, Peace, Peace! Harih, Om

Om! O Mahadev! Through a small fraction of Thy (boundless) grace, I am immortal, I am Vijnana ghana (all-wisdom, the Universal consciousness, boundless and pure), I am blissful. What is there higher than this!

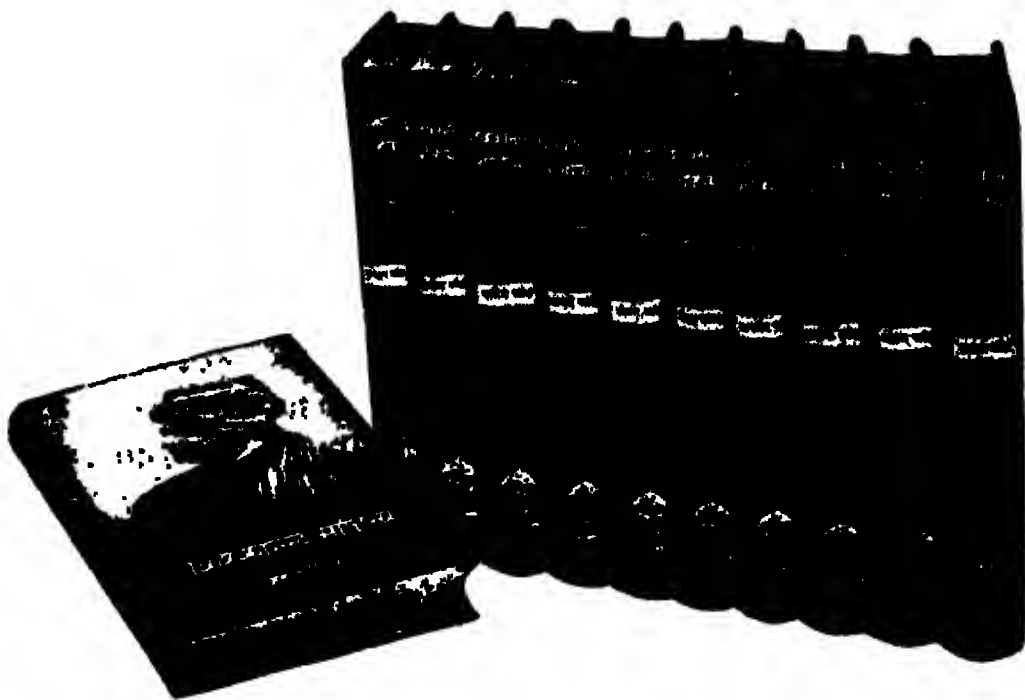
Truth shone not as truth, because the mind was not pure. By the death of the (impure) mind, Hari is all-wisdom. As my nature also is all-wisdom, I am birthless. What is there higher than this!

All non-atmic, non-real things (*jada*) vanish like dream. He who sees the real and the non-real, that immortal One (Achyuta) is by nature all-wisdom. He, verily, he is the Great God (Mahadev). He, verily, he is the Great Hari. He, verily, he is the Light of all lights. He, verily, he is the Great Lord (Parameswara). He, verily, he is the Brahman. I am that Brahman. There is no doubt (about this).

## ● विवेकानन्द साहित्य

कुल १० बंड डबल डिमाई साइज में, अनुक्रमणिका समेत पृष्ठ संख्या प्रति बंड लगभग ४५० ; मजबूत और आकर्षक सजिल्द-नक्क प्रकाशित द्वितीय संस्करण का मूल्य प्रति बंड २८ रु० सम्पूर्ण सेट २७५ रु० । पूरा सेट एक साथ रेल द्वारा भंगाने से रेल-खर्च नहीं लगेगा । पुस्तक विक्रेताओं को विशेष कमीशन दिया जाता है ।

इन ग्रन्थों में स्वामीजी के दर्शन, धर्म, राष्ट्र, समाज आदि विषयक अोजपूर्ण व्याख्यानों तथा, गम्भीर लेखों का पूर्ण संकलन है जो अंग्रेजी में प्रकाशित और अप्रकाशित उनकी सभी रचनाओं, पत्रों कविताओं, व्याख्यानों, प्रवचनों तथा कथाओं का हिन्दी अनुवाद है । अनुवादकों में पं० सूर्यकान्त त्रिपाठी निराला, पं० सुमित्रानन्दन पंत, डा० प्रभाकर भास्कर, श्री फणीश्वरनाथ 'रेणु', डा० बर्मदेश्वर प्रसाद आदि ख्यातिसम्पन्न साहित्यकारों के नाम उल्लेखनीय हैं ।



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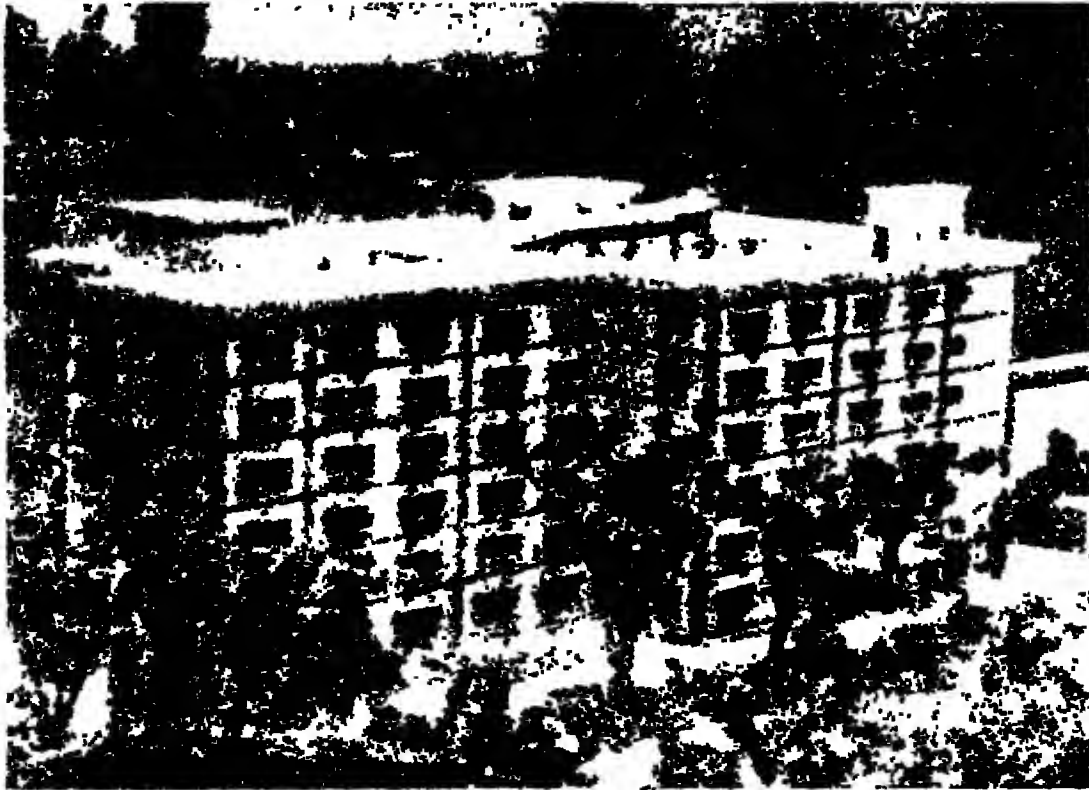
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JUNE 1987

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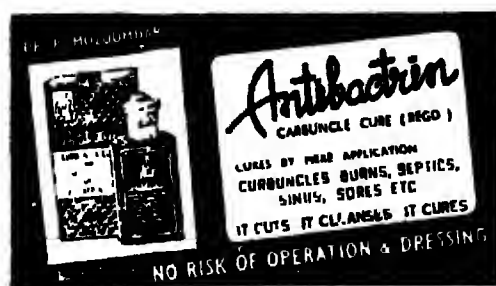
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पृष्ठ ५५०

मूल्य : १०.००

## स्वामी विवेकानन्दकृत योग पर विख्यात पुस्तकें

ज्ञानयोग

रु० ११.००

वेदान्त के गूढ़ तत्त्वों का सरल, स्पष्ट तथा सुन्दर रूप से विवेचन।

राजयोग (पातंजल योगसूत्र, सूत्रार्थ और व्याख्यासहित)

रु० ६.००

प्राणायाम-ध्यान-धारणा द्वारा समाधि-अवस्था की प्राप्ति के विषय में उपयोगी सूचबाएँ और मार्गप्रदर्शन।

कर्मयोग

रु० ६.००

‘आत्मनो मोक्षार्थं जगद्धिताय च’ इस आदर्श के अनुसार कर्म किस प्रकार किये जाएँ, जिससे वे परम शान्ति का निदान बने—इस रहस्य का विवरण।

भक्तियोग

रु० ४.००

भक्ति का सच्चा अर्थ, सच्चे भक्त का जीवन तथा भक्तिमार्ग पर अधिकाधिक अपसर होने के लिए आवश्यक गुण तथा साधनाएँ—इस विषय का अत्यन्त रोचक एवं मौलिक दर्शन।

प्रेमयोग

रु० ५.००

प्रत्येक मानव के हृदय में निहित महान् शक्ति प्रेम का जीवन के सर्वोच्च ध्येय भगवत्प्राप्ति के लिए उपयोग किस प्रकार करें, इसका अत्यन्त भावपूर्ण विवेचन।

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Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

## ETERNAL VOICE OF INDIA

*Vidyayā vindate amṛtam*

'Immortality is attained through Self-knowledge'

All is the letter Om It is explained thus. All that was, that is and that will be, is the Om And also what is beyond all time is verily the Om.

All this is assuredly Brahman, and this Atman is also Brahman. That Atman is four-footed.

The *Vaiśvānara*, whose field is the waking life, whose consciousness is outward, who is the enjoyer of the gross, seven-limbed and nineteen-mouthed, is the first foot (of Atman).

The *Taijas*, whose field is the dreaming life, whose consciousness is inward, who is seven-limbed, nineteen-mouthed, enjoyer of the (subtle) mental impressions only, is the second foot (of Atman)

When the sleeping man does not desire any desirable objects, nor dreams any dream, that state is the deep-sleep state. The *Prājña*, whose existence is in deep-sleep plane, unified, of ingathered potential consciousness, of the form of bliss only, verily the enjoyer of bliss, whose mouth is knowledge, is the third foot

Neither inwards conscious nor outwards conscious, nor conscious of the intermediary state, nor ingathered potential consciousness, nor (total) consciousness, nor unconsciousness—what is invisible, unrelated, unperceivable, devoid of all connotations, unthinkable, undefinable, essentially of the nature of self-consciousness alone, negation of all relative existence, peaceful of supreme bliss and unitary—is called the fourth foot of Atman. That is Atman, He is to be realized.

*Māṇḍūkya Upanisad*  
(1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7)



## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL discusses the importance of the respect to Divine Motherhood in all women, as taught by Swami Vivekananda, in the context of modern times

Sri G Venkataramana Reddy is an outstanding architect of India and scholar in Tamil literature. Mr. Reddy represented India in International Conference on Town Planning held in Moscow. A senior adviser to the government of Andhra Pradesh. Mr Reddy writes in his article POET SUBRAMANYA BHARATI AND THE RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA MOVEMENT on the celebrated Tamil poet Subramanya Bharati and his significant contribution towards the propagation of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideas in South India.

In PRACTICAL VEDANTA FOR TEACHERS Swami Yogeshananda of the Vedanta Centre, Chicago lucidly writes on how Vedanta philosophy of the essential divinity of man, can be applied in teaching young students. The swami worked as a teacher in Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya

Narendrapur, one of the well-known public schools in India. Afterwards he also worked as preacher and writer in the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre of London and Paris.

The recitation drama 'SRINVANTU VISVE AMRITASYA PUTRAH' (Hear ye, children of Immortality) was staged by the students of Vivekananda Vanī Samstha, Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad. A monk of the Ramakrishna Order, under the assumed name Bodhisattva has authored the drama. It is specially meant for public performance by the youth on Swami Vivekananda Anniversary celebrations, or the National Youth Day which is now observed (Government of India, D.O No. F 6-1/84-IYY, Department of Sports, dated 17.10.1984) on 12 January, the birthday of Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Chetanananda of Vedanta Center, St. Louis writes in a fascinating way on Sri Ramakrishna's influence and grace on the life of his great householder devotee Sri AKSHAY KUMAR SEN.

## MODERN TIMES, MOTHER POWER, AND VIVEKANANDA

(EDITORIAL)

A few years ago a group of visitors from different countries came to visit one of the Ramakrishna Mission centres in India. They met a swami and requested him for an answer on what was probably a burning question with them, 'Swami, in our societies today a woman gets a husband and a man gets a wife almost every year. Family is virtually withering. Children are at anybody's mercy. What is going to happen to us and how can we change this

tide?' The swami's answer was categorical: 'If such a condition continues, life in your societies will be without peace. The only way to come out of this plight is to bring about a change in your outlook on women. In the West women are looked upon and valued as wives. In India women are respected and honoured as mothers. Culturally and traditionally Indians respect the eternal presence of the Divine Mother in all women. This outlook

will bring a radical change in your traditional thinking. This is ultimately the way out for you.'

Again, last year after an extension lecture on 'Indian Womanhood' in an Indian University, a girl student got up with a slightly different kind of question, 'Sir, I am a girl belonging to a minority community. I represented my state in athletics four times in all-India competitions. This time when I tried to enrol myself as a candidate, my guardians resisted. They said, "Thus far and no farther. A woman cannot and must not go to that limit". What shall I do now?' The swami's answer again was categorical, 'Indians learnt to see the world-creating and world-destroying Mahāśakti, the great Mother power in all women irrespective of caste, creed or race. During centuries of foreign invasion Indian women could not come out for fear of attacks. But today Indian women have come up boldly and are expressing their higher potentialities in all walks of life, thus contributing not only to their family but also to the national welfare in a hundred different ways. You must also do that. You must awaken the physical, intellectual and spiritual power of the Mahāśakti within you, by self-discipline, hard work and holy idealism. Women must develop total independence, not just physical and social, but also spiritual independence which will make them invincible against floods of sensate temptations.' 'Your words are good', said the girl, 'But how can I practise your ideas?' The speaker answered, 'First of all, you must know these ideas, especially from the burning lives of great women before you. Do you not remember how Rizia Sultana became the first woman supreme ruler of India and how she captured the throne of Delhi? Do not you remember the women rsis, seers of Vedic times, who were repositories of the

highest knowledge? Do not you remember the great Indian women like Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi or Meerabai? Many such great women have been born in India and other countries as well. And then, when you feel exhausted in your struggle for a higher evolution, you must recharge your drooping spirit by coming in contact with holy persons with burning characters, and the holy texts of your religion.'

If modern women with education and efficiency are suffering from the excesses of the women's liberation movement, many others are suffering from the strangling hold of the orthodox and fundamentalist ideas, especially tightening their noose on the helpless and uneducated women folk all over the world.

The women's liberation movement was, in fact, a reaction against the exploitations of the male-dominated societies everywhere in the world. The hankering for psycho-social freedom came to the western woman in the nineteen forties as a reaction to their subjugation and confinement in a Victorian culture. Betty Friedan's revolutionary book *The Feminine Mystique* lit the fire of this conflagration. Women demanded and dreamt of an unrestrained liberty in a materialistic and permissive society. And yet the sense of failure lingered. Prof. B.A. Carol of the University of Illinois in a recent lecture in India confided that in the West women have been treated as 'objects' rather than 'subjects' of history. This is nothing new. The image of woman as 'enchantress' right from the Greek days of Helen of Troy dominated western consciousness.

The Judeo-Christian culture was primarily patriarchal. Women were given a secondary position. In the Judeo-Christian theology Eve is nothing but a dispensable bone from the ribs of Adam. Saint Paul writes,

Man is God's honour and God's image Man does not exist for the sake of woman but woman exists for Man and hence there shall be this difference that a man shall love his wife but never be subject to her, but the wife shall fear and honour her husband, in all obedience and awe.<sup>1</sup>

Martin Luther calls woman, 'A stupid vessel'.<sup>2</sup> Woman is, according to Herbert Spencer, 'arrested man'.<sup>3</sup> It is Protestant religion which undermined the importance of woman in the western culture, and Protestant culture was based on the worship of God as Father.

One single passage of the Gospels -- the beginning of Luke (1:46-48) does honour to Mary. 'My soul doeth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my saviour. For he had regarded the low estate of this handmaiden.' For behold -- from henceforth all generation shall call me blessed' Here is the root of the cult of Mary-- the Great Mother. Eastern orthodox Church of Russia started worshipping Mary as the most holy Mother of God. This is how they pray:

Light of my darken soul, my hope, protection and refuge I thank thee that thou hast enabled me to be partaker of the Body and Blood of Thy dear Son Enlighten the eyes of my heart Quicken me Give me tears of repentance and thanksgiving<sup>4</sup>

India gave more respect to Mother than Father. We call our land of birth as *matrbhūmi* and our national slogan is Vande Mataram and not Vande Pitaram Radha's name comes before Kṛṣṇa (Radha-kṛṣṇa) and Sita's before Rama (Sitarama). In the Vedic rituals, a man would always

perform sacrifice along with his wife, otherwise he would be unfit to perform it.

The earliest Indian scripture where the supremacy of Mother power was established is the *Rg-Veda*. In the Devi-Sukta of this Veda, the Divine Mother declares Herself as the Primal energy: 'I am the Energy behind Siva's bow when He goes to destroy evil for the good of humanity... Those who neglect Me perish' This is also the voice of the law-giver Manu who sees that progress of any society depends on the respect it offers to women: 'Where women are worshipped, there the gods rejoice. Where women are not respected, there all actions turn ineffectual' The Upanisads which generally discuss about the nature of the Ultimate Reality or Brahman, also give us similar ideas The *Kena Upanisad* (3.12) (belonging to *Sāma-Veda*) first speaks of 'Uma Haimavati', of great beauty, who came to teach the gods about the power of Brahman. Subsequently the idea was extended in the later Upanisads. In the *Devī Upanisad*, the cosmic Mother Power says to the gods seeking ultimate knowledge. 'I am, verily, the form of Brahman From me all the world of men and women have sprung into existence. I am the void I am the voidless space, I am bliss, I am the cessation of bliss, I am Knowledge, I am ignorance I am the creator, I am the destroyer.' The *Bhvrchopanisad* says. 'Brahman (the Creator), Viṣṇu (the Sustainer) and Rudra (the Destroyer) all are born from Śakti, the Primal Energy behind the universe'<sup>5</sup>

Agamas or Tantras do not belong to the Vedas, although they date back from the periods of Mohenjodaro or Harappa. But Vedic philosophers accept Agama with respect According to Śaivāgama, Siva is the basis of this universe. Śakti is the

1. Elizabeth Mann, Borgese, *Ascent of Women* (London Macgibbon and Kee, 1963) p 65

2. Ibid

3. Ibid, p. 223

4. Ibid, p 62

5. *Udhodhan* (A Bengali monthly) (Calcutta, Udhodhan) B S 1305 p 549.

manifestation of Siva's power. Of this Śakti the major manifestations are Cit (pure intelligence), Ānanda (bliss), Icchā (will), Jñāna (knowledge), and Kriyā (creative energy). That is why Śakti or Mother is also known as Chidanandasvarūpā and Jnana-Iccha-Kriyamayi. According to Sakta-agama, Divine Mother is none other than Brahman, the Ultimate Reality, the embodiment of Sat-Cit-Ananda. The universe is created from the fundamental space which is of infinitesimally small dimension (the super dense supernova of astrophysics). It is known as Bindu and creations are vibrations (spandana) of nāda (the primordial sound or Word) of this hindu. This vibration (spandana) of Agama is itself the viksepa (the projection power) of Vedanta. That is why ultimate Reality in Indian concept is Ardhanarīśvara.<sup>6</sup> The well-known *Chandi-Saptasati* is the crowning glory of India's devotion to the Supreme Mother of the universe, who comes, at the prayer of her children, to destroy evil and save the earth.

The extremes of the new women's liberation movement are being reflected in many unusual ways. Hellen Peek, founder and special Projects Director of the National Organization of Non-parents (NON), remarked in 1976 that many parents in the West today are preferring to have no children, as they 'threaten the happiness of marriage' and, 'mean the dissolution of romance and the loss of freedom'. Children according to the survey of some psychologists have brought crisis to 83%, to 87% of the parents.<sup>7</sup> The results of this extremist thinking in women's liberation are frightening. Families are

fast breaking. In 1914 there were 100,000 divorcees, while in 1970 some 750,000 divorces in U.S.A. were granted, writes Rebecca Stanford, Professor of Sociology at the University of Nevada, Reno. The divorced women feel themselves 'morally condemned as a failure'. In the pre-liberation days, family life, writes Prof. Stanford, was not a life of 'endless fulfilment, but more a series of hurdles to be gotten over and duties to be performed. Fulfilment was the satisfaction of a job well done'.<sup>8</sup>

In today's pleasure-seeking societies, the primary goal is individual happiness. 'In this search for individual happiness, marriages lose that cohesive quality and conflict increases'. The old glory of motherhood and family stability has been lost today, writes German writer Kyeserling, in a 'conflict between self-interest and duty, between personal ambition and social obligation'.<sup>9</sup>

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Vivekananda reminded the Indians that 'marriage' was not for personal happiness, but for serving the great society for the good of many, for the welfare of many. Sister Christine learnt from her master, Vivekananda, that marriage in Indian life is a great austerity, and that the strength of great Indian monasticism depended always on the austere life of the householders.

The prospect of long years of rearing children in 'selfless dedication' have frightened many votaries of women's liberation. This fear has resulted in the withering away of well-knit families in many cases. Despite these extremes of the liberation movement, the old voices persist. Many mothers feel that being mother is the 'profound goal' and 'beautiful destiny' of all women.

6. *Udhodhan*, op cit., BS 1356 p 449.

7. *PHP* (Japan. PHP Institute International Inc) November, 1976 pp 20-21.

8. *PHP*, op. cit., March 1976, p 3.

9. *Ibid*, p. 16.

In Indian tradition this selfless dedication to the family and children is the way of liberation for all mothers from the hundreds of psycho-physical bondages of life. A growing awareness of these noble responsibilities of motherhood towards children is emerging all over the world. Two women leaders admit, 'Children themselves, although objects of a growing consumeristically oriented love in the modern family, were lost from sight as subjects of concern.'

Despite some success in establishing the equal rights for men and women, the protagonists of this liberation movement have started feeling the need of a change in their outlook. Say the same two women leaders in the West: 'Since the early campaigns for universal suffrage, women have made great strides in society. Equal rights and equality of opportunity in employment are within reach. But women's perception of themselves must change to fulfill their future destiny in the coming century.'<sup>10</sup> At the same time there is a deeper awareness for the need of complete independence for women who feel that 'equality', the much-shouted slogan since the French Revolution was 'just as ruthlessly disregarded during and after the Revolution as ever before.'<sup>11</sup> Today, of course, the scene is changing fast. The voice for liberation from the unhealthy psycho-social bondages of a male-dominated society, is being respected everywhere, except in most rigid and mediocrally oriented fundamentalist societies. Women's roles as leaders are being recognized. Mrs. Betty Williams and Mrs. Maireada Corrigan, co-founders of Women's Peace Movement, were jointly awarded the 1976 Nobel Prize for their efforts towards seeking peace in Northern Ireland. In

recent years India has honoured two outstanding women-scientists as Presidents of the Indian Science Congress. Last year in 1986 P.T. Usha brought four Asiad golds giving a silver lining, almost single handed, to India's drooping performance in Seoul Asian games. The names of outstanding women in the fields of politics, society and science, in the world today are too well-known to be mentioned.

\* \* \* \* \*

In modern times this respect for the Mother Power is making a comeback. J. J. Bachofen in his book, *Myth, Religion and Mother* for the first time asserted the need of Mother Rite idea in this age. Psychologist Erich Fromm in his book, *Crisis in Psychoanalysis* stresses the need of a successful combination of Father principle and Mother rite, for solving the deeper psychoanalytical problems of this age. According to the Chinese tradition all societies run in a cycle of *Yan* and *Yin*. *Yan* is the principle of action, reason, father-power, domination, and patriarchal tradition. *Yin* is the principle of intuition, affection, meditation, love, mutual understanding and matriarchal tradition. Whenever *Yan* dominates any culture for a long time, it loses its power at the end, until it ultimately yields place to *Yin*.

Physicist Neils Bohr in his Nobel prize acceptance speech first mentioned the need of complementarity of these two aspects in our life—the *Yan* and the *Yin*. Today this is, in fact, the foundation and philosophy of Quantum physics. Physicist Fritzof Capra deals on this paradigm shift from the *Yan* to the *Yin* way of thinking in modern science and society as a whole. In his Schumacher lectures he quotes the famous Chinese wisdom:

10. *PHP*, op cit., October 1979, p. 12

11. *Ibid*, p. 14

The *Yan* having reached its climax retreats in favour of the *Yin*

The *Yin* having reached its climax retreats in favour of the *Yan*.<sup>12</sup>

The reaction against the patriarchal Judeo-Christian tradition is also reflected in the new attempt to translate the Bible in a radical new version free from 'the male-bias'. These unconventional translations are not the product of some votaries of women's liberation but of the National Council of Churches (N.C.C.), supported by 32 Protestant and Orthodox denominations with 40 million members. The Council sought to provide Bible readings for worship services that were free from the 'male bias'. Against the old Bible the militant feminists have been complaining for nearly a decade. To proponents, the book is an advance towards equal treatment. To opponents, the translations are tasteless and ridiculous, if not heretical. The task of taking the male orientation out of the scriptures began in the 1970s. Protesting women's groups in several Protestant denominations persuaded the N.C.C. to establish a Task Force for this new translation of the Bible. God in heaven is no longer just the Father but the 'Father (and Mother)'. The Deity is addressed as 'Sovereign One', but never as the 'Lord'. The N.C.C. book of readings, offered for 'experimental and voluntary use in churches', remarkably affects the imagery and impact of many of the best known Bible passages. Additions to the original text are printed in brackets. For instance, 'All things have been delivered to be by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him', (Matthew 11:27) becomes 'All things have been delivered to me by (God) my Father (and Mother), and no

one knows the Child except God, and no one knows God except the Child and any one to whom the Child chooses to reveal God.' Again, 'Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man', (Genesis 2:18,22 Old) becomes: 'Then God the Sovereign One said, "It is not good that the human being should be alone, I will make a companion corresponding to the creature", and God the Sovereign One built the rib which God took from the human being into woman and brought her to the man'. (Genesis 2:18,22 New)<sup>13</sup>

Swami Vivekananda found in his Master Sri Ramakrishna a complementary combination of the transcendence of Siva and the Power of the Divine Mother. Ramakrishna became identified with the Divine Mother of the universe. That is why in his salutations Vivekananda wrote—*susaktik namu tava pade* (I bow down at the feet of yours, along with the Sakti inseparable from you). That is why he used two powerful *bija mantras* at the very beginning of his prayer on Sri Ramakrishna—*Om hrīm ṛtam*—*Om* symbolizing the transcendental aspect of Brahman, and *hrīm* representing the Sakti, the immanent and the Mother power. Vivekananda accepted the idea that in future Ramakrishna will be worshipped as an incarnation of Kali. After Sri Ramakrishna passed away Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi cried aloud, 'Mother Kali! where did you go leaving me alone!' Today the Kali worshippers of Bengal keep almost invariably an image of Sri Ramakrishna besides the image of Kali.

12. *The Schumaker Lectures*, Edited by Satish Kumar (London: Abacus, 1983) p 123.

13. Richard N Ostling's article on 'O God our (Mother and) Father', *Time* (New York) 24 October 1983 pp 40-41

Swami Saradanandaji in his book entitled *Bharate Sakti Puja* said that the greatest manifestation of Sakti in this universe is the life of an incarnation. Saradanandaji quotes a simile of Sri Ramakrishna in this context 'An incarnation is like a powerful king in disguise who goes out at night in the dress of a poor beggar to look after the welfare of his subjects. As soon as he is recognized as the symbol of supreme power, he retreats into the palace.'<sup>14</sup>

Vivekananda explained this Mother-power manifested through the life of his Master, 'In this age the *Brahma-kundalini*—the Mother who is responsible for the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe—has been awakened by the fervent prayers of Sri Ramakrishna' Swami Shivananda, another disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, expatiated on this idea, 'No wonder the individual *kundalini* will be awakened now! That is why we see symptoms of a great spiritual upsurge everywhere. The Mother, the Primal Energy, is sporting for the good of the world using the body of Sri Ramakrishna. We need have no worry this time.'<sup>15</sup> Through Sri Ramakrishna's life, in fact, India saw the regeneration and glorification of Divine Mother in all women, irrespective of caste, creed or nationality. Sri Ramakrishna raised women to their pristine glory of Divine Motherhood and saved them from the age-old exploitations of male-dominated societies.

If in Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda saw the saviour of the masses and the women, in Holy Mother Sarada Devi he saw the emergence of the Great Mother Power that will purify society by inspiring the rise of countless Gargis, Maitreys, and

such other Brahmadakinis—the women-knowers of God—of the Upanisadic age. To one of his brother disciples he wrote in 1894:

You have not yet understood the wonderful significance of Mother's life—none of you. But gradually you will know, without Sakti (power) there is no regeneration for the world. Why is it that our country is the weakest and the most backward of all countries? Because Sakti is held in dishonour there. Mother has been born to revive that wonderful Sakti in India, and making her the nucleus, once more Gargis and Maitreys will be born into the world!<sup>16</sup>

And Vivekananda's disciple Nivedita whom her master offered at the feet of the Holy Mother, realized this truth. About the Holy Mother she wrote, 'To me it has always appeared that she (the Holy Mother) is Sri Ramakrishna's final word as to the ideal of Indian womanhood'. And Nivedita, in her inquisitiveness wondered, 'But is she the last of an old order, or the beginning of a new?'<sup>17</sup> Today we know that Vivekananda was emphatically right. Following the footsteps of Holy Mother Sarada Devi hundreds of women all over the world are coming forward to enlighten the world with the development, in themselves, of a personality which is ancient and yet modern, which is a combination of 'the mother's heart and the hero's will', a combination of purity of the Holy Mother and the dynamism of the Rani of Jhansi or Joan of Arc.

'Total freedom and independence is the symbol of total womanhood', Vivekananda intensely believed.<sup>18</sup> But Vivekananda

14. Swami Saradananda *Bharate Sakti Puja* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Udbodhan) pp. 36-37

15. *Prabuddha Bharata* (Calcutta) December 1986, p. 501

16. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964) p. 181.

17. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' school, 1972) vol. 1, p. 105

18. *His Eastern and Western Admirers, Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1961) pp. 226-228.



knew full well that total freedom means physical, mental, and spiritual freedom. Unless a person, man or woman learns to cultivate a sense of freedom from the mere biological demands of the body, the thousand cravings of the mind, and an unobstructed feeling of the essential divinity within, there is no freedom for an individual. With the true emancipation of women, Vivekananda believed that a race of 'Supermen' and 'Superwomen' would emerge in future.<sup>19</sup> And his disciples knew that the dream would come true one day. Sister Christine, another western disciple of Vivekananda, wrote, 'Some of us believe that if Swami Vivekananda's ideas regarding the education of woman are carried out in true spirit, a being will be evolved who will be unique in the history of the world. As the woman of ancient Greece was almost perfect physically, this one will be her complement intellectually and spiritually- a woman gracious, loving, tender, long-suffering, great in heart and intellect, but greatest of all in spirituality.'<sup>20</sup> About her master's thoughts Christine wrote:

The emancipation of women meant to him a freedom from limitations, which disclose their real power. This Shakti must be roused. If woman's power is often for evil rather than for good, it is because she has been oppressed, but she will rouse the lion in her when her fetters drop. She has suffered throughout the ages. This has given her infinite patience, infinite perseverance.<sup>21</sup>

But who will take the initiative for bringing about this historic emancipation for women? Here Vivekananda took a step which not even Buddha dared to do. 'Am I a woman that I shall solve the problems of women? Hands off! they can solve their own problems.' He saw the

weakness of body consciousness behind chivalry. 'Why should I help you?' he told a western woman disciple. 'That is chivalry and don't you see that chivalry is only sex? Don't you see what is behind all these attentions from men to women?'<sup>22</sup> In his master Sri Ramakrishna he saw the great saviour of women. Jesus, despite his Christhood, failed to give 'woman an equal place to man'. He failed, in Vivekananda's view, to rise above the Jewish custom. No woman was made an apostle with him. Buddha initially stood against the spiritual emancipation of women. But later on, he 'recognised women's right to an equal place in religion'.<sup>23</sup>

It is his master Sri Ramakrishna's life which made him utter the prophetic words about the great role women were destined to play in the coming age. In India he saw that women *brahmavidinis* would appear in future and flood the world with India's spiritual message. Standing on the American soil he saw that 'free America' will one day fulfil this prophetic dream. In the Thousand Island Park he prophesied.

At the present time God should be worshipped as 'Mother', the Infinite Energy. This will lead to purity, and tremendous energy will come here in America. Here no temples weigh us down, no one suffers as they do in poorer countries. Woman has suffered for aeons, and that has given her infinite patience and infinite perseverance. She holds on to an idea. It is this which makes her the support of even superstitious religions and of the priests in every land, and it is this that will free her. We have to become Vedantists and live this grand thought; the masses must get it, and only in free America can this be done. In India these ideas were brought out by individuals like Buddha, Shankara, and others, but the masses'

19. Ibid

20. Ibid

21. Ibid

22. Ibid

23. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama 1972) vol. 7, p. 70

did not retain them. The new cycle must see the masses living Vedanta, and this will have to come through women. 24

24. Ibid. p. 95.

And Vivekananda's disciples saw in their master a boundless faith in the unmistakable presence of the 'Divine Mother, the embodiment of Sakti' in all women.

## POET SUBRAMANYA BHARATI AND THE RAMAKRISHNA VIVEKANANDA MOVEMENT

G. VENKATARAMANA REDDY

Subramanya Bharati is widely known as the morning star of modern Tamil literature, a poet seer and a great patriot. But very little is known about the eminent role played by him in spreading the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda among the Tamils. Therefore it will be necessary to know about the circumstances under which he came to be influenced by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda and the extent to which their influences were reflected in his political life and writings in the shape of soul-stirring poetry, essays, stories etc.

Subramanya Bharati was born on 11 December 1882 at Ettayapuram in Thirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu in the family of scholars who were living in the glorious Tamil poetic heritage. When Bhagawan Ramakrishna attained Mahasamadhi, the age of Bharati was little less than four years. His father dreamt of seeing him as an English educated officer or engineer. But Subramaniam himself had no particular fondness for studies. He roamed at will in and around Ettayapuram and spent long hours with his maternal grand father who was a scholar in Tamil language. Another great Tamil scholar S. Somasundara Bharati who was his childhood classmate said: 'I have personal knowledge of the praises bestowed on Bharathi's father for his child's amazing

poetic gift. When he was barely eight he would compose brilliant verses on the lead given by others. Well known versifiers used to be wonderstruck at this phenomenon.'

The year 1893 is notable in the history of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement. Swami Vivekananda sailed for America for expounding the greatness of Sanatana Dharma before the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. In this same year, for a display of his phenomenal poetic talents in the assembly of poets, the eleven year old Subramaniam was crowned with the title 'Bharati' by the Raja of Ettayapuram.

However his father was unhappy and sent his son to a High school at Thirunelveli town. While Bharati created a stir among the student community by his impromptu wit and spontaneous versification, he failed to get selected for the matriculation examination.

In 1897 the year of triumphal return of Swamiji to his motherland, Bharati, who was then 14 years old, married a young girl of seven. Within few months his father died and the strained circumstances at home made him leave for Benaras for continuing his studies in Hindu College. There he completed matriculation examination and also passed with credit the entrance examination of Allahabad University. His

stay of four years at Benaras also gave him an opportunity to gain fair knowledge of Sanskrit, Hindi and English. In the year 1902 in which Swamiji passed away, at the request of the Raja of Ettayapuram, he returned to Ettayapuram as the court poet. During this period, the abundant leisure at his disposal had been utilized by him for a deep study of the Puranas, Vedantic literature comprising the Upanishads, the Brahma-Sutras, and the Bhagavad-Gita etc. As this assignment was not to his liking, he gave it up in the year 1903. For the first time one of his poems was published in *Viveka-Bhanu* published from Madurai. In the year 1904 at his age of twenty-one, he was appointed as Tamil lecturer in Sethupathi College at Madurai. It was at Madurai, that Bharati came in direct contact with a great soul Sri Gopala Krishna Aiyer who received Swami Vivekananda at Pamban along with Bhaskara Sethupathi Raja of Raninad. Sri Iyer was then serving as Tamil professor in Native College. This poet and scholar translated and published in Tamil the poem, 'Song of the Sannyasin' of Swamiji. The close friendship of Bharati with Sri Gopala Krishna Iyer must have given him a golden opportunity to know in detail about Swami Vivekananda and his Guru Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. So long as he lived in Madurai, Sri Gopala Krishna Iyer had been his admirer and well-wisher. When Bharati decided to leave the post of lecturership, Gopala Krishna Iyer introduced him to his good friend Sri G. Subramanya Iyer who was then the Editor of the famous Tamil national daily *Swadesa Mitran*. G. Subramanya Iyer was one of the earliest disciples of Swamiji. On the evening of Saturday 13 February 1897 Swamiji addressed a very large audience in Pacchiyappa's Hall on 'The Vedanta in its application to Indian Life'. G. Subramanya Iyer was one of the eminent men

who were seated on the platform on that day. Under Subramanya Iyer, in the year 1904 Bharati was given an assignment as sub-Editor of *Swadesa Mitran*. G. Subramanya Iyer was also one of the important functionaries of Triplicane Literary Society and Madras Social Reform Association which enthusiastically provided platform for Swamiji for spreading the message of Bhagawan Ramakrishna during his first visit to Madras, as an unknown Parivrajaka, and during his second and last visit, as an internationally known monk. Especially Triplicane Society is the first organization which introduced Swamiji to the citizens of Madras. Through G. Subramanya Iyer, Bharati came in direct contact with other ardent disciples of Swamiji, that is, Alagia Singa Perumal (more known as Alasinga Perumal, most loved disciple of Swamiji), B. Rajam Iyer (first Editor of *Prahuddha Bharata*), C. Nanjunda Rao, Mandapam Srinivasachariar; M. P. Tirumalachariar, S. N. Thirumalachariar, S. Doraiswami Iyer, Prof. Sundararama Iyer, P. R. Sundara Iyer, Thyagi Subramanya Siva etc. This chain of acquaintance with ardent Vivekanandists of the South, ultimately resulted in Bharati's becoming one among the inner circle of the disciples of Swamiji who took the *diksa* (vow) to spread the message of Sri Ramakrishna under the guidance of Swami Ramakrishnananda, the then President of the Ramakrishna Math, Madras. Bharati highly respected Alasinga Perumal who appears to have taken special interest in shaping Bharati as a true devotee of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda.

As a sub-Editor of *Swadesa Mitran*, a Tamil news daily, perhaps Bharati's writings were confined to only editing the news as it was received for publication and there was no scope for exposing his talents in poetry and prose writing. There-

fore in addition to the duties of a sub-Editor of *Swadesa Mitran*, he accepted the editorship of a literary monthly journal by name *Chakravarthi*. In the capacity as Editor of this monthly journal, Bharati came in contact with Mahesh Kumar Sarma, who was known to Swamiji. By his scholarship Sarma brought the cultures of Bengal and Tamil Nadu closer to each other. He had abundant devotion for Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and wrote their biographies in Tamil. Several of his articles were published in *Chaktavarthi*. *Ananda Math* the famous novel of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya was translated into Tamil by Mahesh Kumar Sarma, and the poem 'Vandemataram' which forms part of this novel was translated for him by Bharati. The affectionate friendship among them had further strengthened the faith of Bharati in the message of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

The message of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna turned Bharati into a true Vedantist and a great devotee of 'Divine Mother'. Sakti The published talks and writings of Swami Vivekananda turned him to be a great patriot. According to him *deśa bhakti* is a part of *divya bhakti*. As a matter of fact, during those days politics in India revolved round *deśa bhakti* only. Many a time in his writings Bharati declared that Vivekananda was made by Ramakrishna, and that the foremost maker of the modern India was Vivekananda. The sensitive genius of the energetic and young Bharati was now inflamed with patriotism. His heart was filled with sorrow at the ignorant, passive, and resigned life of his people. At the same time he was brimmed with anger at the tyrannical misrule of the foreign rulers of his country. He now became a 'revolutionary' and plunged into the

freedom movement. His political guru was Bala Gangadhar Tilak.

At this stage, in the year 1905, the ill-conceived partition of Bengal provoked and embittered the entire nation. Bharati attended the All India Congress Seminar at Benaras. On his way back he visited Calcutta and met Sister Nivedita, the Irish disciple of Swami Vivekananda.

This meeting with Nivedita, the fiery angel of Indian nationalism, and inspired preacher of her master's universal message to mankind, was destined to have a very far-reaching influence on the life and poetry of Subramanya Bharati. Bharati's contempt for the foreign rule and foreign culture was reflected at this very first meeting. According to the biography of Sister Nivedita by Pravrajika Atmaprana, 'Bharati said he felt that though Sister Nivedita was the Swami's disciple, she was a foreigner. Nivedita understood the feeling, so she quietly asked him to get rid of this narrow feeling of religion, caste and creed and get the separatist tendency out of his mind. The words of the noble spiritual daughter of Swami Vivekananda effected immediate transmutation in Bharati, who now accepted her as his spiritual guru and pledged himself to three major tasks—the political liberation of India, the eradication of casteism, and the emancipation of Indian womanhood. Throughout his life Bharati remembered Sister Nivedita with gratitude, indeed as Mahashakti herself in a human garb. The following poem 'Nivedita Devi' by Bharati will abundantly reveal his reverence for her:

Nivedita. Mother,  
Temple consecrated to love,  
Sun dispelling my soul's darkness,  
Rain to the parched land of our lives,  
Helper of the helpless and lost,  
Offering to grace,  
O you divine spark of Truth,  
My salutations to You

Bharati also dedicated his first two volumes of patriotic poetry, *Swadesh Gitangal* (1908) and *Janma Bhoomi* (1909) to Sister Nivedita. Bharati wrote: 'Who without words, in a split second, taught me the nature of true service to the Mother and the greatness of sacrifice.'

On 29 June 1906 Swami Abhedananda along with Swami Ramakrishnananda and Swami Paramananda, landed in Tutuquorin port, and after visiting several towns of Tamil Nadu arrived at Madras on 15 July 1906. During the stay of Swami Abhedananda at Madras for over a month, Bharati appears to have met him several times. All the activities of this Swami during his stay in Tamil Nadu and Madras were covered by Bharati in his journal *India*. He also took this opportunity to publish the translations of the various talks and speeches of the Swami, not only in Madras but also abroad. He also penned a long poem on Swami Abhedananda highlighting his contributions to the preaching of Vedanta and the message of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna.

Now Bharati's determination was keener than ever to plunge into the arduous and perilous uncertainties of the Independence Movement. But all his impetuous contributions could not be published in the rather 'moderate' paper *Swadesh Mitran*. Bharati felt irked and almost imprisoned. To provide a free outlet for his flaming words, a new Tamil weekly *India* was launched in 1906 by the patriotic Mandayam brothers—Tirumalachariar and Srinivasa-chariari who were also the ardent devotees of Swami Vivekananda. They were ready to spend their large inherited fortunes in the cause of the Independence movement. Then came the Congress split at Surat session between the moderates and extremists. It was hardly surprising that Bharati's fiery nature should push him to the side of the extremists led by Lala

Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo Ghose and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. He also unleashed pointed darts at the spineless moderates in politics and the self-centred Indians who still kept out of the freedom struggle. Even for making his political views clearly understood by his readers he skillfully used, whenever possible, incidents from the life of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna and his parables. One such piece of political satire reads.

At one time when the seasonal rains failed, few devotees met Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa for guidance as to what to be done when there was no rain in spite of the fact that it was mentioned in the Panchanga of the year, that there will be regular seasonal rains. Paramahansa heckled at them by suggesting that they may squeeze the Panchangam for water, likewise it is rather funny to note that the moderates believe that it is possible to save our country merely by their speeches.

The burning 'Brazier of Patriotism' that lighted up the poems of Bharati, fascinated even his political opponents. Inevitably the British Government came down heavily upon the front line extremists in the national politics and imprisoned V.O. Chidambaram Pillai, and Aurobindo Ghose. Tilak was deported to Mandalay in Burma to suffer solitary confinement. The net was tightened around extremist papers like *Bande Mataram* (Calcutta) and *India* (Madras). When a warrant was issued to Bharati, on the advice of his friends, in the year 1908, he migrated to Pondicherry to continue the war against the British despotism. Bharati continued the publication of *India* from Pondicherry till its circulation was totally banned in British India in the year 1910.

Soon after reaching Pondicherry, Bharati also launched the publication of a Tamil daily newspaper titled *Vijaya*, a Tamil weekly *Suryodayam*, an English weekly

*Bala Bharatam* and an English monthly magazine, *Karma Yogi*. But their publication had to be stopped abruptly by the end of the year 1910 due to the ban imposed on their circulations also in British India. Thereafter Bharati had to face a hard life. The spirit of Vedanta now inspired him to boldly face his life and cling to his ideals even at the verge of starvation. Number of other revolutionaries who took shelter in Pondicherry were his only solace. Having given up politics, in the month of April 1910, Sri Aurobindo had arrived in Pondicherry in order to begin a long and arduous yoga in his selected 'cave of tapasya'. Bharati and other fellow self-exiles received him at the port and made all necessary arrangements for his stay. In course of time, these self-exiles in Pondicherry and else where in India tried their best to persuade Sri Aurobindo to re-enter politics. But they could not succeed. For a period of eight years (right upto 1918) Bharati had an opportunity to live in close contact with Sri Aurobindo and share the fruits of his intense sadhanas. These eight years of utter poverty and hardship in the life of Bharati was a period of tapasya and deeper study of Vedanta and Shaktism. Writing poetry was considered by him as an integral part of Yoga sadhana. Even during these hard days he never failed to celebrate the birth anniversaries of Swami Vivekananda. This auspicious day in each year was marked with the inflow of poems on Bhakti or Vedanta. He also rejoiced by telling stories of Swamiji, and Sri Ramakrishna to the children around him. Most of his songs on Bhakti, Vedanta, Divine Mother Shakti and Kali were written by him only during the period of self-exile coupled with misery and starvation.

In sweet and simple Tamil which was understandable by all, he serialized the biographies of Sri Ramakrishna and

Swamiji in the journals edited by him. The parables and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna were widely used in all his writings whether on politics, philosophy, religion or any other subject. The extracts from the talks and speeches of Swami Vivekananda were freely used in many of the articles on social reforms and politics. He was not merely a poet, but also a forceful essayist and imaginative story-writer. In his poetic prose on Shakti he begins-

Ramakrishna Muni said

It is possible to lay a fence on earth  
Is it possible to fence the sky ?

An object can be controlled But is it possible  
to control Shakti ?

The body can be controlled, is it possible to  
control the life in it ?

Regulate the way of life, it is possible to control  
the mind.

Shakti dwells in *prana* and mind For this  
Shakti build temple within

In another short poem on Shakti he  
pleads-

O Mother,

Bless me to reach the desired goal

Bless me for filling with virtue

Bless me to have noble convictions  
and determination,

Bless me to gain Jnana with Viveka

With devotion to you, all my sins shall vanish like  
vanishing of the dew in the sunlight

Bharati is a true Vedantist. He advocated Shakti-worship without conflicting with the principles of Vedanta. In his essay on 'Nava Shakti Margam' he defined Shakti as follows:

Though Shakti-worship is common among people, they have not yet understood the principles behind it. Gods will not bestow blessings to those who worship the images and scriptures without understanding their underlying principles

It is wrong to consider that Parasakti is different from Paramatma. In the form of

Sakti, paramatma creates, preserves and destroys the entire universe. Therefore the Saktas, in the saguna stage instead of worshipping nirguna Brahman in the masculine form, worship Brahman in the feminine form as 'Lokamata'. Ramakrishna Paramahansa in his conversation always used to refer as 'May Mother Kali'. The true significance of worship of 'Lokamata' shall be made known to them. Nava shakti is not new to us, but Nava Shakti margam would mean the worship with full understanding of the underlying principles

In his article on 'Bhakti' in *Karmayogi* he says:

You should be aware as to what Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa said Bhakti and implicit belief are the only easy ways to attain *mukti*. Other considerations will not affect them in the least. True Bhakti alone is capable of bestowing you the vision of God. It is impossible to attain it by mere bookish knowledge

Bharati in all his writings condemned the idlers and vain philosophers who carried on their arguments on fate and effects of Karma. According to him practice of Vedanta shall be coupled with tireless work. The life of Sri Ramakrishna had become handy to illustrate his view.

Ramakrishna always used to do 'japam' saying that 'You exist', 'You exist', but I am not, I am not, I am not. Do you consider him to be an idler? Ah! Ah!! Ramakrishna created Vivekananda. And the foremost among those who created our modern India is Vivekananda.

Always man has to work. One who surrenders to God and undertakes any work will never feel tired. It is needless to say that such work will have strength, speed, superiority, beauty and abundance.

Bharati wrote several stories and all of them were intended to convey certain noble message for the purpose of reforming the society or to illustrate certain truth. They are not for mere pleasure of reading. The language used in them were always simple and forceful. The teachings of Sri Rama-

krishna lie buried in many of the stories. 'Chandrikayin Kathai' is one of the long stories written by him for propagating the widow re-marriage. Sri Vireesalingam Pantulu, one of the great social reformers of Telugu desam, is one of the key character in this story. Following is the extract from this story which reveals the Jivan-mukti state of Sri Ramakrishna:

Finally Somanathaier got down from upstairs and asked as to the matter on which they were arguing.

Jivanmukti once attained, will it remain permanent? Is it possible that one who attained it will be again dragged into worldly ties? This is the matter on which we are discussing.

Muthusubha Dikshitar asked Somanathier 'What is your opinion in this matter?'

Somanathaier replied 'I do not have adequate knowledge relating to Vedanta'.

At this juncture Visalakshi entered the scene and asked, 'I do not believe that any one in this world can become a Jivanmukta. Have any one of you attained it or have seen any one who attained it?'

Somanathaier intervened and affirmed 'Ramakrishna Paramahansa was there. He was a great Jivanmukta'.

The above cited extracts are intended, only to illustrate the deep involvement of Bharati in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideals and philosophy.

In matters relating to several social reforms, Bharati never totally accepted the views of Swami Vivekananda. On certain items he was critical, especially regarding the eating of non-vegetarian food by Swamiji. Yet in most of his writings pertaining to social reforms and politics and philosophy, Bharati freely quoted extracts from Swamiji's talks, speeches, letters and writings etc. Thus non-English knowing Tamils were exposed to the message of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna and the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita, Swami Abhedananda and others who were in the forefront in the



Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement in India and abroad.

During eight years from 1910 to 1918, the forced leisure had given Bharati a golden opportunity to dwell deep in Vedanta. The great poems like 'Kannan Pattu' (worship of Kṛṣṇa on all Bhavas), 'Panchali Sapatham', 'Kuil Pattu', 'Pappa Pattu', 'Suya Charitam' (autobiography in poetry), songs on Vedanta, Shakti and Kali were written only during this period. His devotion in the form of patriotism to his Motherland is reflected in all his songs whether they are on Bhakti, Vedanta or Shakti. He had also translated Bhagavad-Gita in Tamil verse. Gandhiji wrote a foreword when this book was published later. Keeping Swami Vivekananda's ideas as base, he wrote in Tamil an exhaustive commentary on Patanjali Yoga Sutras. In this attempt he also made use of certain other famous commentaries then available on this ancient scripture. When this literary work was read out to Sri Aurobindo, he is reported to have expressed his deep appreciation for the work.

Teachings of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna made Bharati accept the universality of Religions. His songs on Bhakti include songs on Jesus Christ and Alla. He wrote for the young, youth and the old. And they had, during those days, a tremendous and the desired impact on the minds of people. His writings had turned many to sacrifice their all for the freedom of our country. Even today there are no parallels to his soul-stirring songs of Himalayan heights. His devotion to Shakti was so great that he never cared for his mundane needs. Perhaps this exalted state of mind enabled him to face life with courage and determination in spite of utter poverty which would have driven any one else with a weak mind to resort to suicide.

At the end of ten years of his life of poverty in Pondicherry, the revolutionary

spirit of Bharati was mellowed down, and the deep study of scriptures coupled with sadhanas turned him an illumined soul with indrawn mind. As he became disgusted of the self-made prison he bid farewell to Pondicherry and entered the British territory on 20 November 1918. At the border itself he was arrested and lodged in Cuddalore sub-jail. Happily at the intervention of Annie Besant and C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar he was released after four days. He spent two more years of poverty at Kadayam, the birthplace of his wife Chellammal in Thirunelveli district. His appeals for help to promote a publishing venture was met with rebuff at every turn. On request he went to neighbouring places and gave brilliant speeches on philosophy and religion. His dynamic and arresting personality drew large admiring crowds. In the month of March 1919 he met Mahatma Gandhi in the residence of Rajaji. This meeting gravitated Bharati towards the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, especially the ethos of non-violence and non-cooperation. It was at this crucial time (December 1920) that his old paper *Swadesh Mitran* welcomed him back to its fold. Bharati was elated and he bade farewell to uncertainties, and lacerations of enforced idleness. In the first quarter of 1921 he seemed to have had a premonition that his life would be cut short, and his writings were accordingly often tinged with the pale cast of otherworldliness. He was often seen to discuss the problem of death in his writings and speeches. One evening late in August, Bharati went to Parthasarathi Swami Temple at Triplicane and as usual offered a coconut to the temple elephant. Unfortunately the elephant which was in rut, struck out at him with its trunk. The unconscious Bharati was however rescued and saved by his friend. But the shock had done already irreparable damage to Bharati's weak body. Despite

devoted attention, on the midnight of 11 September 1921 which happened to be the 29th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's address to the World Parliament of Religions, he cast away his mortal remains to join the realm of immortals.

All through his short span of life he gave his all to his countrymen but got little or nothing in return.

Bharati left behind a glowing and imperishable mass of poetry which had bequeathed a new hope, a new self-confidence, and a whole new generation looking forward to the future. For Tamil literature, the 'Bharati age' of renaissance had begun. Subramanya Bharati remains, even half a century later, the supreme maker of modern Tamil literature, foremost among the patriots and social reformers of Tamil Nadu.

In the state of infancy of Ramakrishna-movement in South India, the message of Bhagawan Ramakrishna and the teachings of Swami Vivekananda were familiar only among a few intellectuals including Bharati who knew English. Only after Bharati began writing, it was possible to bring Ramakrishna and Vivekananda closer to a larger section of non-English knowing people through the incandescent poetry and virile prose of Bharati. Bharati's reverence for Swami Vivekananda was remarkable. He addressed Swamiji as Rajarshi, Sadguru, Srimat Swami, Avatara Purusha, Mahajnani, Jnanarupendia, Hindu Desika and Maha Jyothi, etc. It is our firm conviction that Bharati made

an outstanding contribution towards the spread of the Ramakrishna movement among Tamil knowing population in the earlier years of the movement. The devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda can pay no better homage to this selfless soul than by publishing a book containing all what he said about Sri Gurumaharaj and Swamiji. We conclude by quoting the eloquent homage to Bharati paid in the Madras legislative council in 1928, by Sri S. Satyamurthi, a great patriot and an orator in Tamil and English:

'Sir, the late Subramanya Bharati was a man on whose tongue the Goddess Saraswati can honestly be believed to have danced the dance of patriotism. If he had been born in any other country of the world except India, that man would have been made the poet laureate of that country, would have been given honours and titles by a government which knows how to respond to the feelings of the people, and would have lived and died among the most honoured of the nation. But Sir, being the slave country that we are, he had to live as an exile in Pondicherry enjoying the hospitality of French Government and die a broken wreck, because he found no use for himself under the auspices of this government. But, Sir, martyrs and patriots before him have gone to the same fate. Subramanya Bharati lived and died a patriot. .. I have no doubt that so long as a single Tamilian lives, these songs will remain the priceless heritage of the Tamil race.'

# PRACTICAL VEDANTA FOR TEACHERS

SWAMI YOGESHANANDA

Some of us are under the impression that religion is a spare-time affair. 'If I get time, I'll ' is the phrase with which we begin many of our best resolutions 'If I get home early enough this evening, I'll have time to meditate a little before dinner.' 'I'm going to get myself out of bed earlier in the morning, if I can, so I can do meditation or japa before going to work every day' 'I'll be at the service on Sunday (or the class on Tuesday) if I can arrange my schedule for the week. I hope something doesn't come up '

Personally I have told myself all these things at one time or another, and lived to see my own mind cook up, sometimes in very roundabout ways, circumstances that prevent the execution of my promises. When we do this we only deprive ourselves and very often take it out on ourselves in the form of negativity or feelings of guilt and hopelessness. We begin to think we may never be able to take spiritual life seriously.

Vedanta, at least as taught in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement, is *lived* religion; this is exactly what it means. There are no lukewarm Vedantists; either you are practicing or you are not. The question is how to do it. In the suggestions which follow, the message is that we need to discover spiritual practice as virtually a twenty-four-hour concern. We need not wait until we 'get home'; or until we are too tired to meditate; or until the lunch-break or for the stall in freeway traffic. Our spiritual practice goes on from the moment we wake, throughout the day and even on into our dreamlife at night. When we wake to this fact it is a welcome sign that our 'honeymoon' with the lure of spiritual experience is over!

The following remarks are offered not as preachings on what Vedantists ought to do, but as suggestions which have been tried by others in the past, are being tried in the present, and may be found helpful.

## *The Noble Profession*

In Indian, even more than in other cultures, this is what education has been called. Although one branch of learning (the Veda) was held to be more so than the other (the Vedangas), all knowledge was considered sacred. Learning is the domain of Saraswati Goddess, to all students and teachers. Lord Siva is known as the Teacher of teachers.

## *The Attitude of Teachers toward Students*

*In what sense(s) can we say the teacher is "superior" to the student?*

In age? In having a larger store of facts? In knowledge or wisdom? Or in experience? Every teacher has to ponder this question, not just make assumptions which are quite possibly unjustified. According to Swami Vivekananda, religion is 'the manifestation of the divinity in man'; education he calls 'the manifestation of the perfection in man'. Now as we realize in Vedanta, man's divinity and his perfection are not different. The teacher is the awakener of secular perfection if you will, but the sublimity of that knowledge is not to be forgotten. The teacher has manifested certain aspects of perfection and not others. No one knows what aspects the student will manifest as a result of the educative process. 'Each soul is potentially divine'. All this points to an attitude of samesightedness: both student

and teacher are learners, both are also in fact teachers, and yet there is a practical distinction between the two.

*Do we think of the student or child as a tabula rasa?*

Are these young individuals in the classroom or home, 'material to be molded'? Is the student a blank slate on which to write what we think should be written? Vedanta would discourage us from thinking in this way. It is true only in a very superficial sense, for the mind is a many-layered thing, bearing beneath its deceptively simple surface the storehouse of impressions 'from a beginningless past'. Virtually the whole world of education and psychology is rising now to protest the manipulation of others as objects, especially the young.

As Vedantists we hold firmly to the view that knowledge is within. That is, the real meaning of the word is the *capacity* to judge, discriminate, absorb, compare with past experience and profit by, stimuli from the "outside". The teacher is one such source of stimuli, and a very important one. He or she offers, suggests--worships! One does not force one's worship on the Deity, and the best teachers know without all this philosophy that 'Hands off!' is by far the best rule.

*Does this mean no discipline?*

Far from it. Many, hearing the Vedantic teachings, ask in wonder how anyone can regard the student as God and yet administer discipline. We must remind them of the instruction of Lord Krishna to Arjuna on the battlefield. ('Though all these are forms of Myself), be merely the instrument. I am the accomplisher of every thing'. And that highest vision Sri Ramakrishna had. 'I clearly saw that it

was the Divine Mother who had become the executioner, the block and the victim.'

Discipline too is service and worship. At one period it was necessary for me to nurse a very senior Swami of our Order who was unavoidably placed for the time being in an unaccustomed condition of dependence. That service of mine, the guidance I had to give, was no less a service to God in spite of the roles we had to play! Someone has said the student is in the position of a block of stone or wood in the hands of the sculptor, begging to be cut. True. Cut we shall, disfigure we shall not.

We are not saying that this is easy. Here is a passage from Swami Ashokananda's *Spiritualizing Everyday Life*: "You look upon a child as God and at the same time you have to thrash him when he becomes naughty, it is not easy. It requires a great deal of cleverness, you must inwardly say, 'Lord, you have come to me as a child and therefore when I take the cane and give you a hiding that is my worship, O Lord, so don't take it amiss.' Or if you go to a sick person, you recognize that the sick person is God, but you do not prepare all kinds of sweets and such things to offer him, you bring him sick diet, maybe sometimes you scold him, or hold him down in the bed if he tries to get up. All these things can be done in a worshipful spirit. I do not really see any difficulty about it, it is all in the attitude of mind you have. If you say that it is not possible to have proper reverence while you are engaged in disciplinary action, I shall give you my own testimony in this regard. I have practised this and I have found that it works. You may discipline a person and be very hard on him when it is a necessity of your service to him--not because of any emotion or impulse on your own part, not because you have become annoyed or irritated, but because you think it is the

attitude that will accomplish what you want to accomplish for that person. Inwardly you think, 'Lord, this is an offering to You. An offering on my part to You.' You can be as hard as the occasion requires, and yet at the same time you can maintain the attitude of worship, and it is wonderfully effective "

#### *What about aggressive hostility?*

It may sound naively pious today to speak of prayer as response to the taunts of the denizens of our classrooms. Actually this was the answer given to us by a senior Swami living many years in the West and far from naive. Asked about the best response to someone showing us hostility, he replied, 'I pray for that person, then and there.' This was counseled for monastics, and professional teachers will sometimes have to take sterner steps! Still, the prayer part cannot be left out. And if you have to employ restraints, remind yourself that we are here to please God, not man. This may seem to be a different, more devotional behaviour than the one just given, but in reality they do not differ; in both, you have to think of the Divine.

The delinquent, in a large number of cases, is an individual with talent and energy who has not been given sufficient responsibility in the right directions to develop faith in himself, and has had to compensate for inferiority feelings by bullying.

#### *The charge of favoritism*

If one recognizes this in oneself, a process of conscious correction should be initiated. Sama-darsana, same sightedness, is a prime Vedantic principle and practice—trying to see the same divinity potential in all. The solution for favoritism is a matter of subtlety and sublimation rather

than a lessening or suppressing of affection. Where a special fondness for one student over another persists in spite of ourselves, we can, I think, discover a way of carefully expressing it by which others do not become conscious of it.

#### *Racial, social and religious hurdles*

Suppose we know that what we are attempting to teach runs counter to the students' upbringing, their minds being filled with social and religious prejudices we would dearly love to undo! A great deal of frustration can be worked up by the teacher who tries to repair all the damage done in the home. I am not saying the classroom experience cannot be therapeutic but it is no match for the home background. One simply cannot force liberalism. If one has it, some is bound to rub off. Let us never forget what Swami Vivekananda said. 'If you want to reform John Doe, go and live with him. Don't try to reform him. If you have any of the Divine Fire, he will catch it.' As teachers we are therefore limited.

#### *Has the teacher the right to the fruits of his or her labor?*

This is the celebrated question addressed by the *Bhagavad Gita*. We have the right to work—we have also the right to expect that sincere labor will bear fruit—but we have no right to enjoy those fruits ourselves. We need to know the effects of our systems of education, the efficacy of the processes we use—that is simple feedback. What we have to learn is not to look for the reward of gratitude and appreciation.

I knew a man whose high-school history teacher changed the whole aspect of life for him, opening his mind in a way that few teachers are able to do. He never forgot it, sent her cards, called on her

whenever he was in the hometown and cherished her before others. This is rare. All of you who teach know just how rare it is. You have to sow seeds in soil of uncertain quality with great patience. How true this is I discovered for myself when teaching in a school in India. There I once read this wonderful statement: 'Remember, if you are a history teacher, only a few of your pupils will grow up to be historians; but all will grow up to be adults.'

### *What shall we educate for ?*

What is it, exactly, that we want to produce? Maynard Hutchins of the University of Chicago spent years over this question and wrote volumes in reply. You and I know what it all boils down to—not the production of these or those professions but just to make the student *think*. There is all too little originality in American culture. We tend to homogenize all our achievements. An apple pie recipe is liked in a particular place, it is circulated and used in restaurants all over the country. A television formula, an opera-presentation format, a movie plot, proves popular and is copied by every big producer. All become standardized to the point of monotonous mediocrity. In some other countries education still has the power to make the student think for himself or herself, and to generate creative variation in art, style, habit, taste and thought. May India retain her genius for variety and may the United States discover it! Sings *The Prophet*: 'The vision of one man lends not its wings to another man.'

Sri Ramakrishna told his elder brother, "What shall I do with that schooling which enables one to bundle rice and bananas?" He wanted to know the meaning of life. Vedantists can help students always to look for the *integrating* principle; to see

how physics and philosophy, theology and anthropology, psychology and sociology are all paths up the same mountain.

Those who have read the teachings of Swami Vivekananda know well what it was he would have us teach our youth: the positive, not the negative; not sin, but strength; not the destructive pulling down of ideas, ideals, social frameworks and institutions without offering better substitutes. There is plenty of 'self-fulfilment' and 'self-improvement' being taught today and the motivation for these is largely egoistic—the success of the lower self. Whatever subject we teach, at whatever levels, we are to realize we are to some degree inculcators of value-systems. We may, if we are fortunate and skilful, awaken the spiritual instincts. Then we may be true 'makers of men'.

Thus far we have looked at the attitudes of the teacher. Now what about those of the student?

### *The attitude of students toward teachers*

From the most ancient times in Indian civilization the imparting of knowledge has been regarded as an intrinsically non-commercial activity. To understand all the reasons why teachers (usually Brahmins) never became an organized body of professionals, expecting their due remuneration from a paying society, would require a long discussion. Suffice it here to say that teachers of olden times were content with the thought that their priceless treasures were being passed on down the line of generations and content, too, with the donations of food and other necessities, brought by grateful parents and students, which sustained them. Such was the idealism of a great culture.

The only way any of this attitude can be restored today is to try to cultivate in our children as early as possible a feeling of respect and reverence for teachers (includ-

ing parents) and for scholarship. There must be the understanding that study is a kind of sacrifice and a form of worship. What are the 'gods' but the guardian angels and presiding deities of the culture and way of life of a people? A student is one who, through the austerities and sacrifice of study, strives to absorb and transmit the treasured values of his people to their descendants, taking the heritage from his esteemed teachers, the whole process as a service of 'worship to the Protectors of the society.

The younger the child, the simpler the terms, but the awareness of this philosophical basis of worship must be reinforced at every stage.

This can hardly be effective in the one-life framework of the Semitic faiths and related cosmology. I like to tell the story of the octogenarian in our ashrama library in Shillong, Assam. One day the head of the Center found him studying a Sanskrit grammar. Surprised, he asked the old gentleman, who he knew did not know that language, why he was bothering to pore over it at his age. 'Why, Swamiji,' he replied, 'You see it was a matter of great regret to me that I could not study Sanskrit in this life; now I am trying to prepare myself for the next one.'

Well, we need not be so literal, the important thing is to help our students to have the firm conviction that their study-sacrifice is not dependent on the fortunes of one life alone.

Today there are so many aids to teaching! It really is debatable how much blame for the ills in education should be put upon the young. They *may* excel us; they cannot if we do not lead the way.

#### *Fatigue in the course of our teaching*

There is no question about it, teachers today face the greatest challenge they have ever had. There is now possibly the most

difficult profession in the realm of public contact. After a day in 'the blackboard jungle' many feel that there is nothing left of them, and scores leave the work every year in larger cities.

In pleading fatigue, however, if we are true to our Vedantic convictions, we know that a careful self-analysis (which is incumbent upon us) often reveals ours is more a case of emotional frustration than of limited energy. We have, after all, the entire storehouse of divine energy to draw on, if we together with our attachments, resentments and emotional hang-ups can step out of the way, renewed strength and energy will flow through us. This happens with all creative, objective persons, whether or not they know why. How much more so should it be for us! If we can cultivate, as indicated above, the habit of offering our teaching and all our work to the Lord, trying to see him in the student, the co-worker and in ourselves, and resigning to Him the results of our sincere labor, we should find ourselves buoyed up and sustained and even provided with fresh energy.

#### *A practical tip for meditation*

This is a simple thing recommended for all busy persons but which has been found especially helpful for those in active teaching. When we are beginning our period of meditation the initial act of quieting and concentrating the mind often brings up things we have forgotten to do or wish to remember to do. Perhaps we try to file these away mentally, promising to carry them out when the meditation is over. But by then our mood has changed; we have lost all that! So take a little notebook in with you. As such reminders arise, jot them down and clear them from the mind with a few words on paper: then be at peace.

In closing I will tell you a story about



the Swami who founded our Chicago Center, Swami Gnaneshwarananda. He was a young man fresh from college when he first became interested in joining the Order. The day at Belur Math when he first met Swami Premananda, that great

disciple of the Master asked him about his college career. 'I have finished my education,' he told the Swami.

'Then why have you come *here*?' Swami Premananda asked. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'So long as I live, I learn.'

## 'SRINVANTU' VISHVE AMRITASYA PUTRAH' (HEAR YE, CHILDREN OF IMMORTALITY)

### *A Recitation-Drama on Swami Vivekananda*

#### BODHISATTVA

Characters 1 Swami Vivekananda  
2 Three citizens of modern India,  
A B C

(Enter Swami Vivekananda and stands at the other corner of the stage)

*Chorus in the background*

'Hear ye, children of Immortality. Even those that dwell in higher spheres. I have known the Great Being who is like the effulgent sun and beyond all darkness. Knowing Him alone one can reach the shore beyond death. There is no other way. There is no other way to Immortality.

*Enter A, and B. They stand in one corner of the stage*

A. That was the voice of the Upanisads, of the Vedas, of the ancient *risis* that India heard five thousand years before.

B. But it died down; the Moghuls, the Shakas, the Hunas, the French, the Portugese, and the English—all trampled on the neck of our motherland. And we lost everything, we lost everything . .

A: Yes, we had nothing to be proud of, until the world heard once again the thunderous reverberations of the same voice, of that 'wonderful voice of God', in the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893.

Sw V. 'Children of immortal bliss, what a sweet, what a hopeful name! Allow me to call you, brethren by that sweet name—heirs of immortal bliss—yes the Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth! sinners? It is a sin to call a man so, it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, shake off the delusion that you are sheep, you are souls immortal spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies, matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter

(Enter C)

C. Whose voice is this? Who blows this trumpet of Hinduism in the very West which had so long looked upon India as heathens, people destined to be ruled by others?

Sw V. I addressed the assembly as 'Sisters and Brothers of America'. A deafening applause of two minutes followed, and then I proceeded and when it was finished, I sat down, almost exhausted with emotion.

C: Who is this wonderful speaker?

A: He is Swami Vivekananda, the Hindu monk of India.

**B:** He is an orator by divine right and his strong intelligent face in its picturesque setting of yellow and orange was hardly less interesting than these earnest words and the rich rhythmical utterances he gave them.

**A:** Vivekananda is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him, the West felt how foolish it was to send missionaries to this holy land, India.

**C:** Who sent this monk to the Parliament? His name was not in the list. All the invited Indian delegates went in special chartered ship and they were received at the port by the New York Mayor. What was this monk's credentials?

**A:** Vivekananda went alone, uninvited, floating on the mercy of the Lord. He went almost penniless and was faced with unbearable hunger, insult and cold. He appealed to his countrymen for help and one group answered.

**C:** Let the devil die of cold

**B:** But the devil was destined neither to die nor surrender.

**Sw. V:** I may perish of cold or hunger in this land, but I bequeath to you, young men this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. Trust not to the so-called rich, they are more dead than alive. The hope lies in you—in the meek, the lowly, but the faithful. Have faith in the Lord, no policy, it is nothing. Feel for the miserable and look up for help—it *shall come*. I have travelled twelve years with this load in my heart and this idea in my head. I have gone from door to door of the so-called rich and great. With a bleeding heart I have crossed half the world to this strange land, seeking for help. The Lord is great. I know He will help me.

**B:** It is the voice of the prophet of India's resurrection, that spoke through him.

**A:** And the American newspapers gave an unprecedented ovation to the dark Hindu of the sleeping subcontinent.

**A:** Behold! He brings a new life in the moribund nation that was waiting only for death and extinction. Listen, listen how the Europe heard his message. Listen to Romain Rolland.

**B:** His words are great music, phrases in the style of Bethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock.

**Sw. V:** I came to this country not to satisfy my curiosity, nor for name or fame, but to see if I could find any means for the support of the poor in India. If God helps me, you will know gradually what these means are.

**C:** He is an outcaste. Did Sankaracarya or Buddha go to preach Hinduism and live among the mlecchas? Vivekananda is a sudra, an untouchable. He commits the sin of crossing the seas.

**Sw. V:** Come ye men. Come out of your narrow holes and have a look abroad. See how nations are on the march. Do you love man? Do you love your country? Then come, let us struggle for higher and better things, look not back, no, not even if you see the dearest and nearest cry. Look not back, but forward.

**B:** He dreams of raising India without the wealth of the rich men and the support of the pundits.

**A:** He dreams of raising India through the power and zeal of her younger generation.

**Sw. V:** A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to Lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the down-trodden will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising-up—the gospel of equality.

**C:** Gospel of social-upraising ? Gospel of equality ? Foolish! No, No. India will retain the ancient tradition of caste superiority of Brahmins, and the others must listen to the priests, the only mediators to God. That is the basis of our Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism.

**Sw V:** No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism. The Lord has shown me that religion is not in fault, but it is the pharisees and sadducees in Hinduism, hypocrites, who invent all sorts of engines of tyranny in the shape of doctrines of Paramarthika and Vyavaharika. I have been dragged through a whole life full of crosses and tortures, I have seen the nearest and dearest die, almost of starvation, I have been ridiculed, distrusted and have suffered for my sympathy for the very men who scoff and scorn.

**C:** It is because he was fit for scorn and hatred. Did not we warn him in the past not to proceed too far, not to break the holy custom of our pundits and priests, not to cross the seas, not to preach the Sanatana Dharma in the mleccha land? He is a renegade. Let him not return to India.

**Sw V:** I will not return to this society until I burst upon it like a bombshell and make follow me like a dog.

**C:** He is an iconoclast, a rebel, a destroyer of old values.

**Sw V:** No, I come not to destroy, but to fulfil, I come not to break, but to build the new on the old foundations.

**B:** Did not you hear what the Indian pundits at Bombay decided about this shudra's impending homecoming?

**A:** Yes, they decided that Vivekananda committed the sin of going to mleccha land. Now he can enter India only after

prayaschitta and that too only in the presence of shudras. He will never be able to eat with the Brahmins.

**Sw V:** No man, no nation, my son, can hate others and live. India's doom was sealed the very day they invented the word mleccha and stopped from communion with others.

**A:** Vivekananda says he is a sannyasin and therefore above all caste.

**C:** The son of a non-brahmin parading as a sannyasin, a Paramhansa, a dandi, a yatiraj. My goodness! what can be more ludicrous?

**Sw V:** I do not care what they say, I love my God, my religion, my country and above all myself, a poor beggar. I love the poor, the ignorant, the down trodden, I feel for them—the Lord knows how much. He will show me the way. I do not care a fig for human approbation or criticism. I think of most of them as ignorant, noisy children—they have not penetrated into the inner nature of sympathy, into the spirit which is all love.

**C:** Did India receive him on his return?

**A:** 20,000 men and women stood upto midnight in Colombo, to receive the returning hero.

**B:** The Raja of Ramnad offered his head at the Swami's feet even before they touched the soil of India. Is not it strange? In Madras people just went mad and 20,000 gathered round him and he spoke from the chariot in the manner of Kṛṣṇa at Kurukshetra.

**A:** In Calcutta, his hometown, thousands pulled his car.

**B:** In Punjab the kings knelt at his feet.

**C:** The Avalanche indeed, rode down the continent with its tempestuous fury! Strange! How could it happen?

**A:** Millions of Indians heard him with frenzied expectations.

**Sw V** My India, arise The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awakening and a voice is coming to us, away back where history and even tradition fails to peep into the gloom of the past, coming down from there, reflected as it were from peak to peak of the infinite Himalaya of knowledge, and of love, of work, India, this motherland of ours— voice is coming unto us, gentle, firm, and yet unmistakable in its utterances, and is gaining volume as days pass by, and behold, the sleeper is awakening Like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, that she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from deep long sleep No one can resist her any more, never is she going to sleep any more, no outward powers can hold her back any more, for the infinite giant is rising to her feet,

**A:** He speaks like a prophet and breathes a new life in the dead bones of the nation He stands like Christ near the dead Lazarus and utters 'Lazarus, rise forth'

**B:** And there was a stir of resurrection, of a new life everywhere from Kashmir to Kanyakumari

**A:** Kanyakumari Ah, do you remember his historic meditation there years before?

**C:** What was that meditation? We only know that Sankara meditated on the eternal transience of this world and Buddha meditated on the extinction of all desires, Nirvana.

**A:** Vivekananda meditated not on God but on the deprived and distressed humanity, the mute down-trodden millions of India counting their days for a saviour to raise them.

**Sir I** Remember that the nation lives in the cottage But alas, nobody ever did anything for them Our modern reformers are very busy about widow re-marriage Of course, I am a sympathiser in every reform, but the fate of a nation does not depend upon the number of husbands the widows get, but upon the condition of the masses Can you raise them up? Can

you give them back their lost individuality without making them lose their innate spiritual nature? Can you be an occidental of occidentals, in your spirit of equality, freedom, work and energy, and at the same time, a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts? This is to be done and we will do it You are all born to do it

**C:** Can we too follow him? We, the common men? How does he expect us to be like him?

**Sw I** I have done nothing as yet, you have to do the task If I die tomorrow the work will not die I sincerely believe that there will be thousands coming up from the ranks to take up the work and carry it further and further, beyond all that my most hopeful imagination ever painted I have faith in my country, and especially in the youth of my country

**C:** Did India listen to her prophet's words?

**B:** Yes, she did. She had to. His words are the gospel for this age He is verily the pathfinder for our glorious rejuvenation

**C:** What is his gospel? What did he really come to say?

**B:** He came to show by his life the essential divinity of all souls and the essential unity of all religions.

**C:** Did the great Indians listen to him?

**B:** Listen to what Rabindranath Tagore spoke of him

**A:** 'In the recent times in India, it was Vivekananda alone who preached a great message which is not tied to any do's and don'ts. Addressing one and all in the nation, he said: "In everyone of you there is power of Brahman (God): the God in the poor desires you to serve Him."'

**B:** And now speaks Aurobindo, the sage of Pondicherry.

**A:** 'Behold, Vivekananda still lives in the soul of his Mother and in the souls of her children. Vivekananda was a soul of

puissance if ever there was one, a very lion among men. We perceive his influence still working gigantically, we know not well how, we know not well where, in something that is not yet formed, something leonine, grand, intuitive, upheaving that has entered the soul of India.'

C: But who cares for the words of religion in this age of science? Who cares?

Sir V: Modern science and its sledge-hammer blows are pulverizing the porcelain foundations of all dualistic religions everywhere. In the first place we have to stop the incoming of such a wave in India. Therefore preach the Advaita to every one, so that religion may withstand the shock of modern science. Materialism prevails in Europe today. What will save the West is the philosophy of Advaita, of non-dualism. And India will send this religion of the Upanisads to face reason and modern science.

C: We only knew one philosophy—*'jagat teen kad me net hai'*. What is this strange Advaita philosophy?

Sir V: Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within. Do it either by work or worship or knowledge or psychic control by one or all of these and be free. This is the whole of religion.

C: What shall we do with this philosophy? We better go back to our ancient traditional religion of flower-throwing, coconut breaking, head-shaving and Ganga-bathing.

Sir V: Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man. Temples and books and churches and dogmas are but secondary details.

A: The Harvard scholars asked him to relate the Advaita philosophy to the modern civilization. And he answered.

Sir V: Civilization is not the amassing of wealth and riches. Had it been so, Rome,

Greece and Babylon would not have been buried in the Aegian seas. Civilization is the manifestation of divinity that is in man. That civilization is the greatest which produces the highest number of Buddhas and Christs. That is why, the 'mild Hindu' still lives and lives triumphantly even when many others have died.

C: Will the other religions accept Vedanta?

Sir V: Even the Christians cannot understand their New Testament without understanding the Vedanta. The Vedanta is the rationale of all religions. I come to preach a religion of which Buddhism is but a rebel child and Christianity a distant echo.

C: Oh! He is then nothing more than a champion of orthodox Hinduism.

B: But he never spoke of an exclusive Hinduism. The world stands today in the need of a harmony of religions as his master practised. He only preached the message of his master—Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

Sir V: Brothers, you have touched another chord in my heart, the deepest of all, and that is the mention of my teacher, my master, my hero, my ideal, my God in life—Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. If there has been anything achieved by me, by thoughts, or by words, or by deeds, if from my lips has ever fallen one word that has helped any one in the world, I lay no claim to it, it was His. His life itself was a Parliament of Religions.

A: With all the eminent qualities of head and heart, Vivekananda was egoless and pure like a child. For him the world was not, only God was. He was destined to live like a wanderer on the face of the earth, a parivrajaka scattering the seeds of his master's message for a rich harvest in this draught of the soul.

B: He had the intellect of Sankara and the heart of Buddha.

A: He had the Bhakti of Caitanya and meditation of Siva Himself.

**B:** He was energy personified and action was his message to men.

**A** He saluted Napoleon, the Lord of war.

**B.** To him virtue was another name of *virya*, heroism.

**Sw. V.** I speak nothing but the Vedanta and I quote nothing but the Upanisads

**C:** But the Upanisads are a forest of complex and difficult philosophy. And then, how can this be spoken in the *mleccha* land, and to the *mleccha* people? Hinduism is, after all, a religion of devotion, prayers and acceptance of karma. God's grace is the only way out for the weak and sinners like us. What did he say on this?

**Sir I** Strength, strength is what the Upanisads speak to me from every page. This is the one great thing to remember. It has been the one great lesson I have taught in my life, strength, it says, strength O man, be not weak. Are there no human weaknesses? Says man. There are, says the Upanisads, but will more weakness heal them, would you try to wash dirt with dirt? Will sin cure sin, weakness cure weakness? Strength O man, strength, says the Upanisads stand up and be strong

**I** And he wanted men and women who are physically powerful, intellectually brilliant and spiritually strong. 'Man-making is my mission. I want a man-making religion. I want a man-making education.' That was his slogan.

**Sw. I** We have had lectures enough, societies enough, papers enough. Where is the man who will lend us a hand to drag us out. Where is the man who has sympathy for us. Av, that man is wanted

**C** Did his countrymen appreciate the man-making mission? Did those men of his dream ever come?

**Sw. V** But appreciation or no appreciation I am born to organize these young men, nay

hundreds more in every city are ready to join me, and I want to send them rolling like irresistible waves over India bringing comfort, morality, religion, and education to the doors of the meanest and the most downtrodden. And this I will do or die

**B:** And the power that emanated from these prophetic words engulfed India shooting up its heroes to great heights of achievement. Did not you hear what Netaji Subhas Chandra said about Vivekananda?

**A:** Had he been alive today I would be at his feet.

**B:** And what did Nehru realize?

**A:** Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's prestige, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems, and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present.. He came as a tonic to the depressed and demoralized Hindu mind and gave it self-reliance and some roots in the past.

**B** But a prophet never comes for a single race or nation. Did not he speak of his global mission?

**Sw. V** Remember, my mission is nation making and world-moving. I belong as much to the whole world as to India

**C:** Did the world outside India recognize him?

**B:** Through the filter of British Newspapers Vivekananda's words reached the table of Tolstoy who read Vivekananda's works all through the night. Listen to Tolstoy.

**A:** I was reading Vivekananda again. So far humanity has gone backward from this true and lofty and clear conception of the principle of life but never surpassed it.

**Sw. V** The goal of life is to realize the divinity within all of us. Be not an imitation of Jesus or Buddha. But be a Buddha or a Jesus. Religion is being and becoming. Christs and

Buddhas are but waves on the infinite ocean which I am.

C: But the world is too preoccupied with greed and power to listen to this mystical prophet.

A: Yes, the world can ignore this prophet only at its own peril! The first world war came and Europe had been turned into a vast cemetery.

B: The second world war came and the atomic bomb exploded on our mother earth bringing the dark prospect of a total global disaster.

C: Today the conflict among nations has brought the prospect of a thermonuclear Third World War and this time it will be the end of civilization. What did your prophet say about this?

A: Listen, listen to what the prophet said ninety years before

Sr. V: The whole of western civilization will crumble to pieces in the next fifty years if there is no spiritual foundation. It is hopeless and perfectly useless to attempt to govern mankind with the sword. You will find that the very centres from which such ideas as government by force sprang up are the very first centres to degrade and degenerate and crumble to pieces. Europe, the centre of the manifestation of material energy, will crumble into dust within fifty years if she is not mindful to change her position, to shift her ground and make spirituality the basis of her life. And what will save Europe is the religion of the Upanisads

A: This he spoke ninety years before. Europe did not listen and Europe suffered.

C: Did the other nations listen to your prophet's words?

Sr. V: Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to truth or die. Indian thought, philosophical and spiritual, must once more go over and conquer the world.

C: Strange! His words sound like thunders! But after all, what is the use

of glorifying India's thought, when millions still live below the poverty line? Should we not get the material prosperity of the West before all tall talks of Indian culture and Indian heritage?

Sr. V: I am one of the prodigiest men ever born, but let me tell you frankly, it is not for myself, but on account of my ancestry. Do not be in a hurry, do not go to imitate anybody else. This is another great lesson we have to remember. Imitation is not civilization.

C: Did the other nations listen to your prophet's words?

B: Here is the Russian thinker Y. Chelysev.

A: Many years will pass, many generations will come and go, Vivekananda and his time will become the distant past, but never will there fade the memory of the man who all his life dreamed of a better future for his people, who did so much to awaken his compatriots and move India forward, to defend his much-suffering people from injustice and brutality.

Sr. V: Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, of growth, and well-being. Where it does not exist, the man, the race, the nation must go down. All are marching towards freedom. We are all journeying towards freedom. All the social upheavalists, at least the leaders of them, are trying to find that all their communistic or equalising theories must have a spiritual basis, and that spiritual basis is in Vedanta only. I have been told by several leaders, who used to attend my lectures, that they required Vedanta as the basis of the new order of things.

C: Strange! Even socialists and foreigners are accepting Vedanta!

B: Here is Huang Xin Chuan, a leading thinker of China speaking of Vivekananda.

A: Vivekananda stands out as the most renowned philosopher and social figure of modern China. His philosophical and social thought and epic patriotism not only inspired the growth of nationalist move-



ment in India, but also made a great impact abroad.

C: Strange! Not even the greatest Vivekanandist of India could make such a confession! Yet, yet, we know all too well.

B: Wait, wait History is yet to begin The Prophet's dream is coming true. India is conquering the world through the power of spirituality and Vedantic ideas. Listen to the famous indologist Prof. Basham speak on Vivekananda.

A: It is Vivekananda who initiated the counter-attack from the East to the West It is a friendly counter-attack of peace and spirituality of India.

C: Strange! But will these dreams come true through the youth of India many of whom are westernized, drug-addicts and foster only hatred for the nation, after getting their degrees?

Sw. V: I consider every man a traitor who having been educated at the expense of millions, pays not the least heed to them But I have faith in the youth of my country. One day they will come and veer round me This I see clear as daylight.

A: Yes, hundreds of youth followed him and died on the gallows Hundreds and hundreds made sacrifice of whole lives And millions of Indian youth have come today to respond to the prophet. Today the national youth day in India rings with Vivekananda's message. He is our national hero, our leader and saviour. India today

resounds with the inspiring prophecies of young prophet of modern India.

Sw. V: India will be raised not with the power of the flesh, but with the power of the Spirit, not with flag of destruction, but with the flag of peace and love The national ideals of India are renunciation and service. Intensify her in those two channels and the rest will take care of itself I do not see into the future, nor do I care to see. But one vision I see clear as light before me that the ancient Mother has awakened once more, sitting on her throne, rejuvenated, more glorious than ever Proclaim Her to all the world with the voice of peace and benediction

B That time has come, India strides the world scene today like a gentle colossus.

A: Today India is fulfilling the prophecy of her prophet. And the world respects Vivekananda as the prophet of modern times.

C: Incredible! Verily, verily it is true that a prophet is honoured everywhere save in his own country.

A, B & C: Hail to thee, the Great Teacher, the Prophet and the Pathfinder who came to us from higher spheres to lead us from slavery to Freedom, from darkness to Light, from death to Immortality

(Chorus)

*asato mā sadgamaya  
tamaso mā jyotirgamaya  
mṛtyormā amitam gamaya*

*They Lived with God*

## AKSHAY KUMAR SEN

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

The advent of an avatar signalizes a renaissance, a juncture in history when a new age of civilization is ushered in by a massive cultural revival. The life of the Divine Incarnation is a force, and his ideas are new and inspiring. In particular, his mysterious charm and sublimity hold a special attraction for writers, poets, dramatists, painters, sculptors, and musicians, energizing their talents. One of the artists to feel the avatar's attraction was the poet, Akshay Kumar Sen, whose masterpiece was *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Punthi*, a long narrative poem of Sri Ramakrishna's life.

Akshay was born in 1854 at Maynapur, a small village in the Bankura district of Bengal. Because his father Haladhar Sen and mother Bidhumukhi were too poor to afford a good education for him, Akshay was brought up in the countryside and educated in a village school. Little is known about his early life beyond the facts that he was devoted to Lord Krishna and lived humbly. In the course of time he married, was widowed, married again and had two sons and one daughter.

To escape poverty in his native village Akshay moved to Calcutta and found a job as private tutor to the children of the Tagore family of Jorasanko. It so happened that Devendra Nath Majumdar, a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, was working in the office of the Tagore estate and lived under the same roof as Akshay. But Akshay did not dare to introduce himself to Devendra because of his inferiority

complex—he felt himself to be unattractive, unlearned, and poor. He felt even further removed from his aristocratic employer.

As a humble devotee of Krishna, Akshay took formal initiation from his family guru a year before he met Sri Ramakrishna, and practised japam and meditation at night on the bank of the Ganga. In time, however, he became discouraged because, in spite of all his spiritual practices, he still had not received the vision of God.

One day Akshay was enjoying a smoke on the verandah when he overheard Devendra and Dharendra, a young man of the Tagore family, talking about a paramahansa (a man who has realized Brahman and renounced the world). Akshay was intrigued and wanted to know more about this paramahansa. He knew that such a high soul was a knower of God—one who could help others to see God.

Later, when Devendra was alone, Akshay approached him, saying: "Sir, you were talking about a paramahansa. Could you tell me where he is?" Brushing the question aside, Devendra asked him, "What good could it possibly do you?" Akshay was hurt, but his curiosity increased. Later he came to know from Dharendra that Sri Ramakrishna was the paramahansa, and that he lived in Dakshineswar.

Six months passed. Akshay's mind was possessed by Sri Ramakrishna. Coming from a village, he had no idea where Dakshineswar was located. Without the

help of Devendra he would never have the opportunity to meet Sri Ramakrishna. Summoning his resourcefulness, Akshay decided to serve Devendra anonymously. Knowing that he smoked early in the morning, Akshay, before Devendra arose from his bed, prepared perfumed tobacco with burning charcoal, and left his hubble-bubble in front of the door to Devendra's room. Devendra, of course, was delighted to have his favourite smoke, but wondered who was serving him. Within a few days he found out that it was Akshay who was preparing the tobacco for him. When he asked why, Akshay said, "Sir, would you please take me to meet the paramahansa?" Seeing his sincerity and humility, Devendra agreed.

On a Saturday, probably in the early part of 1885, Mahima Charan Chakrabarty had arranged a festival and invited Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees to his house at 100 Cossipore Road, in North Calcutta. Akshay heard that Devendra was planning to attend the function and that Dharendra was going with him. His heart was pounding, for it was unbearable to wait any longer to see this paramahansa. As the two men were getting into their hired carriage, Akshay rushed to Devendra and holding his feet with both hands, pleaded with him, saying, "Sir, please allow me to accompany you to the place you are about to visit." Devendra consented.

The carriage arrived at Mahima's house at five o'clock in the afternoon. Ram, Manomohan, Surendra, "M:", Vijay Krishna Goswami, and other devotees were present. Devendra and others took the dust of the Master's feet, and Akshay followed them. Akshay noticed that the Master smiled a little and cast a gracious glance towards him. Then he sat in a corner and looked intently at the Master. Forgetting his body and surroundings, he was captivated by Sri Ramakrishna's charm and conversation. He

felt as though he was being carried away on a current of bliss. After awhile the devotees began a kirtan in the courtyard. As soon as the Master heard the sound of the drum and cymbals he hurriedly joined the kirtan party and started to sing the following song:

Behold, the two brothers have come,  
who weep while chanting Hari's name.  
The brothers who dance in ecstasy and  
make the world dance in His name!  
Behold them, both weeping, and making  
the whole world weep with them,  
The brothers who, in return for blows,  
offer to sinners Hari's love.

Intoxicated with divine joy, Sri Ramakrishna began to dance with the kirtan group. At times he went into samadhi and remained motionless like a statue; at other times, in partial consciousness, he danced slowly and rhythmically. The Master created such a tangible spiritual atmosphere that Akshay felt as though he were in heaven. Vijay Krishna Goswami, a Brahmo leader, was dancing next to the Master. Suddenly he pointed to Sri Ramakrishna and exclaimed: "This is our Krishna!" These words were a revelation to Akshay, and he directly experienced their truth—that the Master was none other than Sri Krishna for whom he had been yearning since his youth. The Master appeared to him as the very incarnation of love.

The kirtan ended at nine o'clock in the evening, and the devotees began to tend the Master. One fanned him and another brought ice water for him to drink. Meanwhile Mahima arranged a dinner with various delicacies for Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees. After dinner Sri Ramakrishna was taken to a room where he talked with the devotees. Akshay thought to himself: "The Master has revealed his divine nature to his close devotees. Without his grace and without devotion, none can understand him." Suddenly Sri Rama-

krishna began to sing Lord Krishna's words in his melodious voice:

Though I am never loath to grant salvation,  
I hesitate indeed to grant pure love.  
Whoever wins pure love surpasses all,  
He is adored by men,  
He triumphs over the three worlds.

Listen, Chandravali! I shall tell you of love:  
Mukti a man may gain, but rare is bhakti.  
Solely for pure love's sake did I become  
King Vali's doorkeeper

Down in his realm in the nether world.  
Alone in Vrindaban can pure love be found,  
Its secret none but the gopas and gopis know.  
For pure love's sake I dwelt in Nanda's house,  
Taking him as My father,  
I carried his burdens on My head.

When the festival was over the Master left for Dakshineswar. Akshay got into Devendra and Dharendra's carriage along with Ram, a householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Ram had befriended him that evening, telling him many wonderful things about the Master. Thus, when Ram got out of the carriage in Simulia where he lived, Akshay got out with him. In Ram's house he listened to many more stories about Sri Ramakrishna. At two o'clock in the morning he finally went home.

After that first meeting Akshay longed to see the Master again, and his mind was absorbed in thoughts of him. A couple of days later Akshay had the opportunity to go to Dakshineswar with a friend. This time Sri Ramakrishna asked Akshay many things about his life, including whether or not he was a Brahmo.

Generally the Master did not allow Akshay to touch his feet, a refusal which hurt him greatly. Instead, Sri Ramakrishna would say: "Let your mind be purified. Then you may do so." Nonetheless, after three visits Akshay was convinced that if anyone could give him the vision of Krishna, it was Sri Ramakrishna. Later he realized

that Krishna and Ramakrishna were one and the same. He wrote in his *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Mahima*:

I neither talked with Sri Ramakrishna nor asked any questions, but this I knew: that whosoever received the touch of the Master on his chest, would lose outer consciousness and in that state would see Krishna. Expecting this, I continued to visit him. Not only that: Whenever I would see him I would feel myself to be a different person. I used to think how it would be when the Master, out of mercy, touched my chest. Many days passed, but he did not fulfill my desire. I used to go to him with great hope and return home with tearful eyes and disappointment.

I only talked to him twice in my whole life. One day, seeing him alone, I said: "Master, I am blind [i.e., ignorant]." To this the Master replied: "God exists." [What Sri Ramakrishna meant was: "You might be blind, but God has eyes to see you."] Another day I carried an ice cream cone for the Master, but he did not touch it. I asked: "Master, why did you not eat the ice cream I feel terrible!" He answered with a smile: "If you had brought the ice cream at noontime, I would have eaten it. I would have been sick if I ate that cold thing at night, so I did not."

The way the Master treated me! If he had treated any other person in that way, he never would have returned. So many devotees touched his feet, and yet whenever I would try to touch them, he would withdraw his feet and sometimes even move back, saying: "All right! All right!" The Master used to speak about abstruse spiritual matters and I could not follow what he meant, so I would sit silently in a corner, my eyes always on him.

It is difficult for an ordinary person to understand the actions and behaviour of an avatar. He may eradicate the bad karma of a devotee through harshness, or he may crush the ego through indifference. If a devotee can endure such ordeals, he achieves something. Akshay tried to wipe away the impurities of his heart through tears and prayers, and gradually he felt the Master's silent benediction. Later he wrote in his book: "What Sri Ramakrishna

demonstrated and explained to me led me to the firm conviction that he is God Himself. He is an avatar, Lord of the universe, the Almighty. He is that Rama, that Krishna, that Kali, indeed, that Satchidananda. He is beyond mind and intellect, but again, he is known only through the pure mind and intellect."

During that trial period Akshay lived in fear and agony. He was afraid of the Master, and yet he felt that the Master was like his father. He was irresistibly attracted to Sri Ramakrishna and yet did not know how to express his love. On one occasion Akshay begged Devendra to ask the Master to bless him. Devendra went to Dakshin-eswar and delivered Akshay's request to the Master. Sri Ramakrishna said: "What shall I say? You give him some advice." Accordingly Devendra told Akshay to chant the name of Hari (Krishna). Akshay took this advice and began to practise japam with longing.

On April 6, 1885, Devendra arranged a festival at his house in Sri Ramakrishna's honour. Akshay was included among the crowd of devotees. Because Devendra was busy supervising the dinner, he asked Akshay to fan the Master. Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in the parlour surrounded by devotees. To Akshay's great delight, he and Upendra sat near the Master and massaged his feet.

On January 1, 1886, Sri Ramakrishna became the Kalpataru (wish-fulfilling tree) and blessed many devotees, saying: "Be illumined." The occasion was the Master's afternoon walk in the Cossipore garden. As the Master entered the garden, the devotees followed him. Akshay, who was seated with a few others on the low bough of a tree, saw him. He rushed to where Sri Ramakrishna was standing and found the Master, absorbed in samadhi, in the middle of his devotees. Akshay picked two champaka (Michelia Champaka)

flowers and offered them at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna.

After awhile the Master came down to the normal plane of consciousness and touched the devotees one-by-one. This act created great emotional fervour and excitement among the devotees. Some received the vision of their Chosen Deity; some experienced the awakening of the kundalini; some felt unspeakable bliss; and others out of ecstasy, began to laugh, cry, and shout. Akshay watched the entire scene from a distance. Then suddenly the Master's eyes fell on him, and he called to Akshay: "Hello!" Akshay ran to the Master, who touched his chest with his hand and whispered a mantram in his ear. At once Akshay experienced the effect of the Master's blessing. He could not contain the onrush of bliss, and unable to withstand such an upsurge of emotion, he fell to the ground. His limbs twisted as if he were deformed, and he burst into tears.

On August 15, 1886, Sri Ramakrishna's physical condition became critical. Swami Vivekananda had arranged for Akshay to fan the Master that night. When evening came, Sri Ramakrishna tried to eat a little farina pudding, but could not swallow it. Exhausted, he again lay down on his bed and went into samadhi. Sashi (later, Swami Ramakrishnananda) cried out and asked Akshay to call Girish and Ram, two of the Master's close devotees, from Calcutta. Akshay immediately rushed to Calcutta, reported the Master's critical condition to them, and then hurriedly returned to Cossipore.

After his samadhi the Master was extremely hungry and asked for food. This time he ate a full bowl of pudding without any difficulty, which greatly relieved the devotees. Then in a clear voice the Master repeated thrice: "Kālī, Kālī, Kālī", and slowly lay back on his bed. After some time he again went into

samādhi. His eyes were fixed on his nose, his face covered with a sweet smile. Sri Ramakrishna passed away on August 16, 1886, at 1:02 a.m.

After the Master's passing Akshay used to decorate Sri Ramakrishna's photograph with sandal paste and sing his glory to the tune of a one-stringed instrument. Although he had no literary skills, Akshay felt a compelling urge to write something about Sri Ramakrishna. The scriptures say: "By the grace of God, the dumb become eloquent and the lame scale mountains." Devendra Nath Majumdar, who had first taken Akshay to meet Sri Ramakrishna, now suggested that he write about the Master's life. (Akshay acknowledged this encouragement in his book).

Still, Akshay had doubts about his ability, which he expressed to Swami Vivekananda. Though something was urging him from within to write about the Master, he felt that he did not have the literary skill to do so. Seeing his sincerity, Swami Vivekananda told him the story of the English poet, Caedmon. Caedmon was an illiterate herdsman, who did not even know the alphabet. One night he had a vision of an angel, and by that angel's grace his poetic faculty came to life. Caedmon composed extemporaneously and even recited his hymns and poems in public.

Inspired by this story, Akshay began to write Bengali verse in 1887. After he had finished the early life of Sri Ramakrishna, he read it to Swami Vivekananda at the Baranagore monastery. Swamiji was deeply moved and took him to Holy Mother, who was then staying at Belur. Holy Mother, after listening to the manuscript, blessed Akshay. Later, while she was at Kamarpukur and Akshay was also there, the Mother invited the village women, who had known the Master personally, to come so Akshay could read

his book to them. On this occasion the Mother, in an ecstatic mood, again blessed Akshay and asked him to write more about the Master. Akshay gratefully acknowledged that Girish and Swamis Yogananda, Niranjanananda, and Ramakrishnananda had given him the materials for his book.

Akshay wrote the life of Sri Ramakrishna in the style of Krittivasa's *Ramayana* and Kashiram Das' *Mahabharata*. The book was first published in four parts between 1894 and 1901 under the title *Bhagavan Sri Sri Ramakrishna Puramahamsadever Charitamrita*. Later, on November 25, 1901, all four parts were published in one volume under the title *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Punthi*. His Bengali poem of the Master's life has not yet been translated into any other language.

On one occasion Swami Shivananda explained how *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Punthi* came into being:

Akshay Sen, the author of *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Punthi*, helped many people of the world. He was a good man, and a great devotee, but extremely poor. The facts which he presented in the *Punthi* are really beautiful. We did not know many of those stories. Akshay collected all the material from contemporaries of the Master at Kamarpukur, Sihar, and other places. He then wrote the life of the Master in the poetic style of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in simple village language. Now, even the learned appreciate the *Punthi*. Akshay was not a scholar, but he had tremendous sincerity. We heard that when he started to write this book, he held an ordinary job in Ahiritola, and used to write at night. We further heard that at night he would go to the bank of the Ganga and call to the Master with a longing heart: "Master, please give me strength so that I can write something about your precious life." Immediately he would feel inspiration from within and, returning to his apartment, would start to write. This *Punthi* is well written.

In 1895, during the birthday celebration of Sri Ramakrishna, Akshay publicly read for the first time *Sri Sri Ramakrishna*

*Punthi* on the northern verandah of the Master's room at Dakshineswar. Swami Adbhutananda was present. Impressed, the Swami said: "Akshay Babu, you have performed a great service for the people. You have written the life story of the Master in such a beautiful way that even the women [the majority of whom were not educated at the time] will be able to understand him."

Akshay sent a copy of his book to Swami Vivekananda, who was then preaching Vedanta in America. In the beginning of 1895 Swamiji sent a letter to Swami Ramakrishnananda from the U.S.A., in which he wrote:

Just now I read Akshay's book Give him a hundred thousand hearty embraces from me. Through his pen Sri Ramakrishna is manifesting himself. Blessed is Akshay! Let him recite that *Punthi* before all. He must recite it before all in the Festival. If the work be too large, let him read extracts from it. Well, I do not find a single irrelevant word in it. I cannot tell in words the joy I have experienced by reading his book. Try, all of you, to give the book an extensive sale. Then ask Akshay to go from village to village, to preach. Well done, Akshay! He is doing his work. Go from village to village and proclaim to all Sri Ramakrishna's teachings. Can there be a more blessed lot than this? Akshay's book and Akshay himself must electrify the masses. Dear, dear Akshay, I bless you with all my heart, my dear brother. May the Lord sit on your tongue! Go and spread his teachings from door to door. There is no need whatever of your becoming a sannyasin [monk] Akshay is the future apostle for the masses of Bengal. Take great care of Akshay, his faith and devotion have borne fruit.

In this letter Swamiji wrote out a few ideas which he wanted Akshay to include and expand in the next edition of the book.

In the *Punthi*, Akshay divulged that he had received the humorous title of "Shankcunni Master" from Swami Vivekananda in 1885. "Cunni" literally means "a female ghost wearing bangles"; and because he was a schoolteacher, he was

called "Master". Swamiji called him "Shankcunni Master" because of his appearance—small eyes, thick lips, a flat nose, a thin body, and a dark complexion. In later years Akshay grew a long grey beard and moustache, wore thick glasses, and often donned a turban. All this contributed to his rather strange-looking appearance.

Akshay's poetic talent did not end with the writing of Sri Ramakrishna's biography. He also put the Master's teachings into simple, melodious verse. This book included 141 teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and was published in 1896 under the title *Padye Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa-dever Upadesh*, or *The Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa in Verse*. Fourteen years later, in 1910, Akshay wrote *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Mahima* (The Glory of Sri Ramakrishna) in question-and-answer form. In this Bengali book, not yet translated into any other language, the reader will marvel at Akshay's literary craftsmanship, rational outlook, and deep understanding of Sri Ramakrishna's life and philosophy.

Akshay worked for some time at the Basumati publication office, which was owned by Upendra Nath Mukhopadhyay, a lay disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. After retiring from that job Akshay left Calcutta for his village home and there passed the remainder of his life. Once, however, Doctor Umesh Babu and other devotees took him to Mymensingh (now in Bangladesh), where he lived for several months, reminiscing about the Master. He was helped financially by devotees from Mymensingh, Dacca, Madras, and Lucknow.

Once, when Akshay was visiting Udbodhan, Swami Saradananda presented him with a set of *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lila Prasanga* (*Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*) and requested him to read it. Akshay later said to a young monk:



Brother, I took those books and put them in my room. I was a little conceited, thinking that "M." and I had written about the Master, so what else could Swami Saradananda write about him? Then one day it suddenly flashed in my mind that my monastic brother had given me all those volumes free, and I, out of ego, had not even opened them! Brother, I was dumbfounded after reading them. I realized that in the *Punthi* I had made some mistakes because I had received the information second-hand, whereas he had based his stories on direct evidence. Then, though I was old, I corrected my book as much as I could. This is my last corrected edition of *Punthi*. I hand it over to you. I shall not live long. I entrust you to give this volume to Swami Saradananda. Let him publish it in the future if he wishes. My request to Swami Saradananda is to please send a certain percentage of the profit from the book sales for the worship of the Master here.

In spite of his poverty and other family problems Akshay passed his days in recollectedness of the Master. Every morning before his worship he would pick flowers and clean the vessels. Then in a sweet voice despite his age, he would sing the name of God, accompanied by his one-stringed instrument. After bathing and performing the worship he would either read *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master* or write something. In the summer months at noontime Akshay would go to the shrine and fan the Master. During the last three years of his life, when he could not perform worship because of asthma and other physical disabilities, his daughter-in-law, to Akshay's great relief, took the responsibility of the Master's worship.

Akshay was sincerely devoted to Holy Mother. His home and the Mother's parental home were in the same district, so whenever the Mother was in Jayrambati, Akshay would go barefooted with a staff in his hand to meet her. He would always carry something on his head for Holy Mother. Bowing down to her, he would pray for liberation. Once in Jayrambati

Akshay called: "Mother," and the Mother answered: "Yes, my son." Akshay then boldly said: "Mother, I called you 'Mother' and you answered 'yes,' so I have no fear anymore." To this Holy Mother said: "My son, do not talk like that. 'Success comes only to a careful person.'"

Emotional and oversensitive by nature, Akshay expected love and affection from all, especially from the Master and Mother. At one time he wrote to Holy Mother in Jayrambati complaining that she was paying more attention to her Calcutta devotees than she was to him. The Mother replied in a letter: "... I understand the contents of your letter. You have written about your visit to Jayrambati, but I did not know about it. So long as I am alive you are welcome to visit me. I have no like or dislike for anybody; I consider everyone as my own. There is no division in my mind. When you took refuge in God you became my own. Please do not lament. Whenever you have the opportunity you are free to come here. Your letter surprised me. Keep your mind free from all impurities."

Holy Mother had told Akshay: "There will be a little suffering towards the end of your life." Four days before his death he had a fever and suffered from blood dysentery. When Akshay's end came near, his younger brother started to chant the name of Sri Ramakrishna. All of a sudden Akshay said to those around him: "Please keep quiet now. I see the Master and the Mother." Everyone present noticed that his face was luminous and his eyes were half-closed. Then he breathed his last. Akshay died at 9 a.m. on Friday, December 7, 1923, at the age of seventy-three.

In the divine drama of Sri Ramakrishna, Akshay played the role of minstrel, and his ballads are still spreading the immortal life and message of the Master

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS \*

### SNOW-WHITE MAYAVATI OF SHIVA

There are certain days when Mayavati becomes the seat of Mayadhisha, a vast white cremation ground of Shiva. 19 December 1986 was such a day. From 18th morning onwards it was raining torrentially. The temperature went down below 0°C. At night came the shower of small ice-balls. Then it was all silent. All winds stopped. Even the bell-bird's midnight sounds could no more be heard. There was an awful silence and freezing cold.

On the 19 December early dawn we saw the first snowfall of the year. It was all white in three-inch thick snow. The mountains, the hills, the gorges, the trees and bushes, everything were covered with snow-white ice. The sky was covered with black clouds. A mysterious light emanated from the ice and the sky. Everything looked unknown, remote and mysterious. There was no sign of life anywhere, no stir in the trees, no song or flight of birds. Mayavati brothers stood in awe and silence in that early dawn looking at the wondrous view of nature. Thick icicles hung from the branches of huge tall cedars. The bushy tops of cypresses were all white. The lawn was all white, except for the bare stem of rose trees now jutting out as remnants of some happy summer. The mountain paths all got blurred in the all white panorama. The deep gorge below was all white, with dark tree trunks standing here and there.

We touched the ice thrice on our head and then stepped with deep reverence on the snow-white body of Shiva. From the mountain tops He came that day to envelop the world of Mother Prakriti in His white mantle of purity and transcendence. Everything turned white like ashes in a vast cremation ground. The seven

coloured panorama of the Himalayas suddenly changed into a world of white and black. Forms of hills and trees were indistinct. Only Shiva remained within and without. Some green leaves were scattered here and there on the white body of Shiva as if Mother Prakriti did her last worship before merging in her eternal companion, the Purusha. The experience of the vast snow-white cremation ground brought a strange blankness in our heart. It was even difficult, during the first few moments, to think that there was a world outside Mayavati. It was a foretaste, even though temporarily, of Nirvana.

As the sun rose, the ice began to melt and the vast panorama slowly started returning to its old form. After this ascetic period of staying in Shiva's transcendence nature now looked greener. It got its first seasonal bath of ice. It was indeed a rebirth. For some days the white ice remained unmelted in nooks and corners, in gorges and terraces. Even after seven days when we were walking on the valley above the Mayavati Ashrama, vast stretches of fields were full of thick ice. In the morning sunlight the wheat fields up in the valley, with all the surrounding fields, looked strangely beautiful and new.

In the Indian tradition, Shiva is all-white like the mountain of silver (*rajatagirinivah*). Shankara describes this all-white Shiva in one of his hymns: 'Oh Shiva Thy body is white like ashes, and white is Thy smile. The human skull on the hand is white. Thy axe is white and white are Thy bull,

\*This month's 'Notes and Observations' has been contributed by Swami Ajitatmananda, of Mayavati Charitable Hospital, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati,

and Thy ear-rings, white is the Ganga flowing in foam from thy matted locks, and white is the crescent moon on thy forehead. Oh all-white Shiva, give us the boon of complete freedom from all sins forever and ever.'

Despite all love for Shiva's white transcendence, one cannot stay long in the realm of the Absolute (Nitya) and has to come down to the plane of relative existence (leela). Unity in diversity is the law of creation. The final vision of Reality must be a vision of complementarity. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that in order to know the belfruit we must take it in all

its aspects, its outer shell, its seeds and its kernel. Similarly we must accept both the transcendent (Nitya) and the immanent (leela), both the unmanifested and the manifested, both Purusha and Prakriti. Purusha is only the transcendent form of Prakriti, just as Prakriti is the immanent form of the Purusha. The final Reality in the Indian vision is both Purusha and Prakriti, the Ardhanarishwara, Uma and Maheswara, Hara and Parvati. On this memorable morning of 19 December 1986 Mayavati made us realize the truth of the Indian vision of Uma-Maheshwara, of Ardhanarishwara.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

ADAM AND EVE (*The Spiritual Symbolism of Genesis and Exodus*):

By S. D. FOHR. Published by University press of America, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, Maryland 20706 U.S.A. 1986 Pp. 147 + xii. \$ 10.25.

In this book the author gives us some original insights concerning the interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures. He starts with the conviction that the Bible contains deeper truths as one really gets into its symbolism than when one merely remains at the superficial level either by taking the accounts as literal and historical or by discarding them as merely fairytales for entertainment. The author's attempt is in this way praiseworthy in so far as it helps the religious man perceive the truth concerning the Bible. Another positive note concerning the work is the endeavour to point out that the Bible contains the same basic truths as expressed in other (religious) traditions. One may at the same time doubt whether one can extend the symbolization so far as, for example, to assert that the waters in which Jesus walked are 'the ocean of birth and death' (p. 40).

After giving an enlightening introduction regarding the esoteric (internal) and exoteric (external) aspects of religions (Chapter 1) the author goes on to show the correspondence

between the four ages and the Hindu cyclic view of history (Ch. 2). Cain and Abel are interpreted as symbolizing the lower and higher tendencies in all of us (Ch. 3). Here the author offers fascinating interpretations. Cain is for example the elder brother. This symbolizes the phenomenon that lower tendencies are the first that develop in us. Cain's being a farmer suggests also the lower tendencies, whereas Abel is a shepherd which has spiritual connotations (leader, guide, protector). A farmer, being sedentary, has a tendency to store up material possessions whereas the shepherd cannot afford that luxury, he symbolizes the spiritual view of life in which we see ourselves as visitors (or pilgrims) on earth. Concerning the murder of Abel, Cain's marks on forehead, Cain being bringer of technology etc we find possible interpretations and explanations.

In this way there are 12 chapters which offer interesting material for reflection. Chapter 4 and 12 draw our special attention on account of the profound interpretations concerning the Ark of Noah in terms of cosmic egg, the waters as Prakriti, the fall of man as splitting of androgynous Adam into Adam and Eve corresponding to the universal splitting of Purusha and Prakriti.

The book contains a good index of keywords. The bibliography demonstrates books

and authors of various important religious traditions and philosophies of religion. The success of the work depends upon the reader's understanding of what a symbol is. The author would have better included also some insights of Karl Rahner's theology of symbols (Theological Investigations, vol. 4).

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**FROM THE UNREAL TO THE REAL:**  
By SWAMI BHASHYANANDA. Published by Vivekananda Vedanta Society, 5423 South Hyde Park Blvd Chicago, Illinois 60615, U.S.A. 1986. Pp. vii + 403. Available in India at the Ramakrishna Maths, Nagpur, Bombay etc for Rs. 40.

*From the Unreal to the Real* is a compendium of Swami Bhashyananda's lectures, writings, class-notes and talks in the U.S.A. for over last twenty years. Swami Bhashyananda from his early youthful days led a life of hard spiritual discipline in the Nagpur center of Sri Ramakrishna Math where Swami Bhaskarishwar-ananda, himself a monastic disciple of Swami Shivananda (a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and brother monk of Swami Vivekananda), inspired him to dedicate himself to life, spiritual. Swami Virajananda, a monastic disciple of Swami Vivekananda and the 6th President of the Ramakrishna Math, to whom the present volume is dedicated initiated Swami Bhashyananda with the sacred word. After spending a few years of his early monastic days in the Ramakrishna Mission's Institute of Culture in Calcutta, Swami Bhashyananda went to Chicago in the sixties and since then is patiently building up the Vedanta movement in the States. His practice and precept of spirituality in the light of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda have charmed the American spiritual aspirants, many of whom have become his ardent admirers. A few of them have become monastic members of the organization as well.

Swami Bhashyananda believes that the acceptance of the Vedanta way of life will bring about peace and harmony in the world.

The spread of 386 pages of his book has been conveniently spaced in four parts viz. I Religion, II Hinduism, III spiritual Practices and IV Sri Ramakrishna. Each part contains

readable chapters covering a number of aspects of these four broad topics. The part I on religion thus comprises of 13 chapters, more interesting of which are (1) Essentials of Religion, (2) Apparent and Real Man, (3) Potential Divinity, (4) The Religion that can satisfy a Modern Seeker, (5) Religion and Human Fellowship, (6) The Universal Religion (7) The future of Religions.

Part II deals with Hinduism in outline. The universal elements in Hinduism have been highlighted here and goals of human life, set according to Hinduism, have been detailed. One chapter deals with worship of God in the form of Mother. There are two chapters on the spirit of the Bhagvad-Gita and Buddha's Message of Peace and enlightenment respectively. The Hindu theology accepts Buddha as an incarnation and the Hindus have imbibed in their ethics, Buddha's message of love and peace.

The third and perhaps the most important part is about 'spiritual Practices'. This is full of information and practical hints for the safe journey of a *Sadhaka* on the path of Realization. The essentiality and limitations of rituals have been described here. Various types of *upasanas* or meditations have been described and the efficacy of the paths of Bhakti, Karma and Jnana has been discussed. It is this part of the book which would prove immensely useful for the ardent seekers of Truth.

The last part of the book deals with Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda. Throughout the book Swami Bhashyananda copiously quotes from the sayings of these divine personages and juxtaposes them vis a vis the quotations from the Gita, the Bible and the Upanishads. The quotes from the Bible, thus make it easy for the western readers to comprehend the subtle spiritual truths which are basic to every religion. This also reinforces their faith in their own scriptures.

Prof. Sam Fohr of the University of Pittsburg at Bradford has rightly said in the introduction of the present volume that scattered through these essays are gems of insight and memorable analogies which are bound to help any aspirant go further along the spiritual path. Prof. Fohr further says that although the term 'religion' is derived from Latin word meaning 'to bind', it is ironic that religions have tended to divide people into opposing groups. Swami Bhashyananda's book is an attempt to reverse this process. The book emphasizes unity in diversity and can very well serve as a guide for

all those who want to tread on the right path of religion.

The book has an appreciative foreword by Swami Vyomarpuranda and an evaluative introduction by Prof. Sam Fohr.

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#### A NOTE

The review-article on *The Orient in American Transcendentalism* published in P. B. April 1987 was written by Swami Sarveshananda of the Ramakrishna order, now preaching Vedanta in Florida.

Florida. U.S.A.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION HOME OF SERVICE, VARANASI

#### REPORT FOR APRIL 1985 TO MARCH 1986

The Home was started in 1900 as an independent institution under the name 'Poor Man's Relief Association' by a few young men who were inspired by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. The work was begun with a capital of only four annas. These young men used to take care of the poor and the diseased, sometimes collected from the roadside. Swami was delighted to see their dedicated service and renamed the institution the 'Home of Service'. It was affiliated to the Ramakrishna Mission in 1902. From this modest inception, the Home of Service has now grown into a fully equipped modern hospital taking care of the poor and the suffering as living manifestations of God.

The activities of the year are outlined below.

**Indoor General Hospital:** The total number of cases admitted during the year was 6,299; of these 3,168 were relieved, 1,897 cured. 525 discharged otherwise, 560 died and 149 remained under treatment at the end of the year. Surgical cases totalled 3,256, intramuscular injections 52,434 and intraarticular injections, aspirations and lumbar punctures was 49,221. During the year there were 2 ailing destitutes picked up from the city roads in the hospital. The percentage of patients treated free was 34.83 and the average daily occupancy of beds was 167.

**Outpatients' department:** The number of patients treated, including those treated at the branch at Shivala, was 2,44,363 (new cases: 65,983) and the daily average attendance was 783. There were 3,312 surgical cases and 5,341 intravenous and intramuscular injections.

**Homeopathy.** The homeopathic sections at the Sevashrama campus at Luxa and at the Shivala branch, attended by 5 homeopaths served 22,853 patients (new cases: 5829)

**Clinical and Pathological Laboratory:** 34,117 different tests were conducted in the laboratory

during the year in the areas of clinical pathology, serology, chemical pathology, L.F.T. (liver function tests) and bacteriology.

**X-ray, electrotherapy and E.C.G. department:** 4,670 X-ray exposures were taken during the year under report. 648 cardiac patients were helped by the ECG section and a considerable number of others by the electrotherapy section.

**Invalid's Home:** Two separate homes maintained 18 men and 38 women, the men being mostly old and retired monks of the Ramakrishna Order. The women were poor widows who have no one to look after them.

A newly constructed extension building of Female Invalid's Home and renovated and upgraded old block of the same were declared open by the President-General of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission on 14 February 1986

**Outdoor relief to the poor:** Monthly pecuniary help amounting to Rs. 6,183 was given towards food, house-rent, school-fees etc to 47 persons. Besides books were provided free to the poor students and dhatus and cotton blankets were distributed among the needy.

**Goshala:** The home maintained a Goshala for the supply of good milk for its patients.

**Immediate needs:** 1. Funds for the maintenance of 200 beds in the hospital. 2. Endowments for beds. the cost of endowment for a single bed is Rs. 30,000 but Rs. 10,000 or Rs. 5,000 may also be given as partial endowments to perpetuate someone's memory. 3. Endowments for the Invalid's Homes: Similar endowments are essential to maintain the old men and women in these two homes. 4. Donations to meet the accumulated deficit of Rs 15,064.25 5. Construction of residential quarters for the nursing and other staff: Rs. 5 lakhs. 6. Construction of a bigger cowshed and a fodder store-room for the Sevashrama-dairy: Rs. 1,50,000.

Contributions may be sent to the Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service, Varanasi, 211-010.

## PRABUDDHA BHARATA: 90 YEARS AGO

'He who knows the Supreme attains the highest'—Tait. Upa. II. 1. 1

Vol. I  
No. 12

MADRAS, JUNE 1897

Published  
Monthly

### Retrospect

The present number concludes the first volume of the *Prabuddha Bharata* and it is now time enough to ask what we have learnt from it. Thus questioning ourselves, we find we have learnt many things. Indeed, even its short history is remarkably full of lessons and one of the most important which we, i.e., those who are connected with it, have learnt and which we shall do well to carry with us to the very end of our lives is this—sincerity of purpose and purity of heart work wonders even in this 'iron age'. We had no grand ambitions when we started the journal such as bettering the world and so on. All that we wanted was to improve ourselves, and we had a conviction that what is good for us may at the same time be useful to some others. Nor had we any such motives as fame, position, money, &c. The idea of starting the journal struck us providentially, as it were, and whatever may be its fate in the future, we should be eternally grateful to God for having allowed us to enter into the work with singularly pure hearts. We were at the time perfectly free from both rajasic self-confidence and tamasic ambition. In such a happy state which we shall ever remember with pleasure, we sought and obtained permission from where such permission should be obtained and 'commenced operations'. What success has attended us is due entirely to the blessings we received and the purity of our hearts. And that success has been of no small measure. On every side were 'crammed' as it were, with sympathy, and everywhere, men—for whom we cannot be sufficiently thankful—identified themselves with the cause quite unsolicitedly and worked for its success—so that at the very starting we had 1,500 subscribers and every month the number has been steadily increasing and now it stands at about 4,500. Our journal thus happens to be the most widely circulated monthly in all India. The first two issues have had to be reprinted and we have a very limited number of copies of the other issues though we printed 5,000 copies of every number.

Besides such patronage from the public at large, we were unsolicitedly favoured with expressions of encouragement and appreciation by several eminent personages, whose words are always entitled to our respect.

Mr. H. Dharmapala, General Secretary, Mahabodhi Society wrote, for instance, 'All hail to the *Prabuddha Bharata*. I send herewith one pound sterling in the name of the Mahabodhi Society for the *Prabuddha Bharata*. May its mellifluous fragrance purify the materialistic atmosphere of fallen India! Your efforts will be crowned with success, and *Prabuddha Bharata* will surely awaken the lethargic sons of "Bharat Varsha"'

In conducting the journal we always keep in our minds the advice Swami Vivekananda gave to us at the very outset:—'Avoid all attempts to make the journal scholarly. it will slowly make its way all over the world I am sure. Use the simplest language possible and you will succeed. The main feature should be the teachings of *principles* through stories. Do not make it metaphysical at all. Go on bravely. Do not expect success in a day or a year. Always hold on to the highest. Be steady. Be obedient and eternally faithful to the cause of truth, humanity and your country and you will move the world. Remember it is the person, the life, which is the secret of power and nothing else.'

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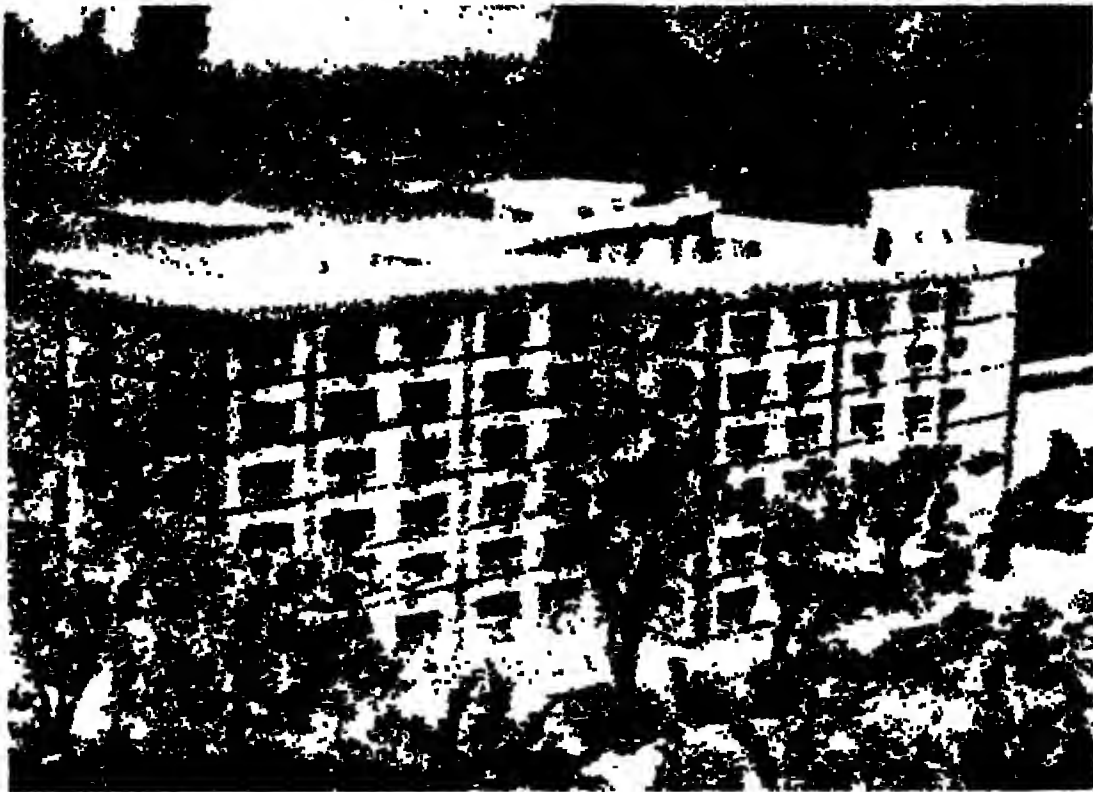
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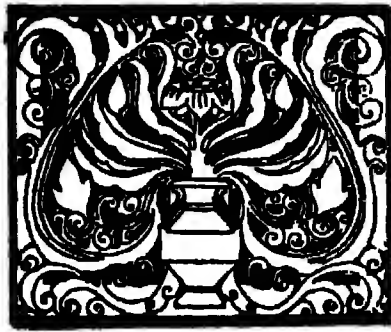
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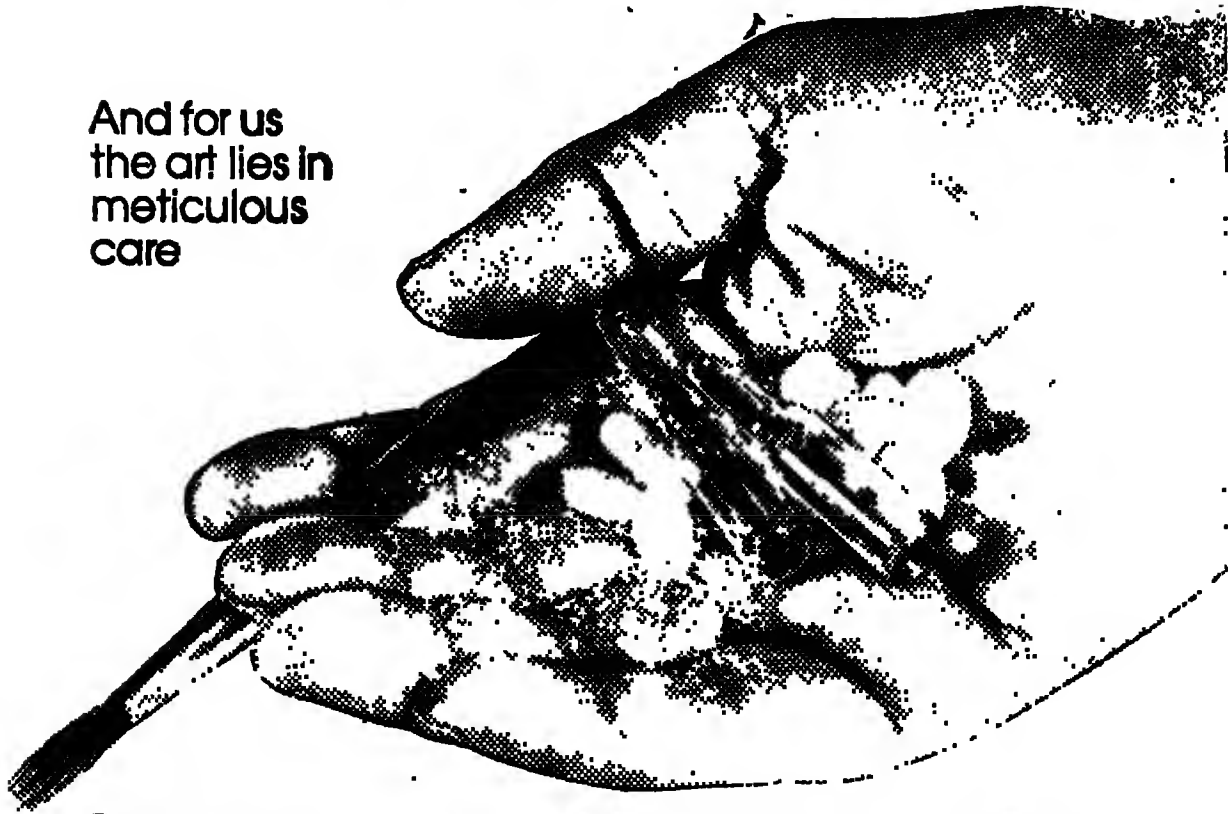
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# Prabuddha Bharata

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Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

## ETERNAL VOICE OF INDIA

*Vidyayā vindate amrtam*

'Immortality is attained through Self-knowledge'

In the beginning (all) this was verily the Ātman alone. Nothing else whatsoever living, existed. He thought: '(Now) verily shall I create the worlds.'

It was declared by the Rsi (Vāmadeva)—'Even being in the womb have I known the births of all the gods. A hundred iron holds held me down, (but) like a hawk I have broken them by force', thus spoke Vāmadeva even while being in the womb.

Who is this Ātman Whom we worship ? What is that Ātman by Which (man) sees form, hears sound, perceives smells, utters speech and knows the tasteful and also the distasteful ?

What is heart is the same as mind. The consciousness, command, particular knowledge, cognition, retention, perception, perseverance, reflection, self-mastery depression, memory, imagination, determination, desire, attachment—all these are (but different) names of the consciousness.

... The world is Knowledge-manifested, so Knowledge is its basis ; and hence Knowledge is the Brahman.

After having gone beyond this world, he by that Ātman of knowledge attained that Heaven (of Brahman) where all his desires were fulfilled and attained immortality.

*Aitareya Upaniṣad (1.1.1, 2.1.5, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.1.4)*



## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is based on the recent interest taken by Russian academicians in Sri Ramakrishna's and Swami Vivekananda's message of universal peace and harmony, and in the spiritual ministration of the Ramakrishna Order towards that goal.

Swami Ranganathananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and the celebrated preacher of Vedanta, was awarded the first INDIRA GANDHI AWARD FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION FOR 1985. This acceptance speech was delivered by Revered Swamiji on 31 October 1986 at the Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.

Swami Hiranmayananda, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission recently visited Singapore, Malaysia, Japan and Moscow. In his MEMOIRS OF FOREIGN

TRIPS Revered Swamiji recounts some of his experiences in those countries.

150th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA, PRIME MINISTER'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS is a short speech delivered on 10 February 1987 by our Prime Minister Sri Rajiv Gandhi during the inauguration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna organized by the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi.

Swami Siddhinathananda of the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Calicut, discusses the age-old Indian way of attaining peace through the observance of Dharma. RELIGIOUS RESOURCES FOR PEACE is the text of his paper presented at the 'Inter-Religious and Ideological Dialogue' held at the Sophia Centre, Kottayam, Kerala, on 5 December 1986.

## RAMAKRISHNA VIVEKANANDA IN THE RUSSIAN HORIZON

(EDITORIAL)

In the mid February of this year Moscovites suddenly saw something which they had never even dreamt before. Three best hotels of Moscow, especially the Kosmos Hotel, suddenly began to hum with one thousand celebrities from eighty different countries. They were all invited to Moscow to attend a three-day International Forum on *Nuclear-Weapon-Free World for the Survival of Humanity*. The host, of course, was Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev who reminded the audience in his concluding hour-long speech, 'You have arrived in the Soviet Union when essentially revolutionary changes are under way.'<sup>1</sup>

Revolutionary, indeed, was this gathering in the Kremlin Palace in the entire history of Russia. Among the participants in the three-day Forum were Peter Ustinov, actor Gregory Peck, writer Graham Greene, economist John Kenneth Galbraith, fashion-designer Pierre Cardin, noble-peace prize winner Physicist Andrei Sakharov just released from long solitary imprisonment in Siberia, and American actor Kristofferson who is running a mini-series on *Amerika* (a new T.V. film in which Kris stars as the leader of a guerilla movement opposing a Soviet rule in U.S.A.). Besides these internationally known artists, writers, and intellectuals there were one hundred and thirty religious leaders including Christian

1. *Time* (New York) 2 March 1987, p. 4.

monks representing different churches, and two ochre-clad monks from India, Swami Hiranmayananda and Swami Gitananda of the Ramakrishna Order, Belur.

Never before in Soviet history the iron curtain was lifted both for the insiders and outsiders in such a way. Gorbachev called this lifting 'broad democratization' and the beginning of our 'New Approach to Humanitarian Problems!'<sup>2</sup>

The Forum was meant for an all-out effort to end nuclear proliferation. But the most important aspect of this Forum is that it was not just political. The participants were not just diplomats. They were mostly thinkers, intellectuals, artists, writers, and even religious leaders. Gorbachev's chief aim now was to take leading men and women from all walks of life, of all nations, especially the thinkers and academicians, into confidence for an all-out effort to stem the possibility of a nuclear war. In the Peace Conference he gave a bold call for a change: 'Society is ripe for a change', he said, 'If we back off now, society will not agree to a return. We have to make the process irreversible. If we do not, who will? If not now, when?'<sup>3</sup>

Moscow's warm invitation extended to Swami Hiranmayananda, the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Order, to speak in the very opening session meant for the Religious leaders from different parts of the world, was striking. The Swami spoke on Sri Ramakrishna's harmony of faiths and religions as the way to ensure global peace and harmony. And this is the message through which a super-power like Soviet government could proceed in order to ensure peace in a war-free world. Post-revolutionary Russia deplored religion as an opium for the masses. Today after seventy years of the revolution

Russians are in need of a religion, a new religion which is rational, universal and man-centred. In Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideals Russians may discover *that* religion which would help them fulfil their great dream as the peace-maker of modern times.

\* \* \* \*

As a nation Russia was always conscious of its own greatness, and of a great role it was destined to play in the world civilization. The old Russians thought of their society 'as the one society pregnant, as the Old Believers maintained, with the future hopes of Mankind.'<sup>4</sup> In the mid-sixteenth century Moscow emerged as the fourth great capital of a universal state under Christian inspiration. Like Rome, Russia built up its new great holy city of St. Petersburg. For two hundred years it stood until with the communist take-over of Russia, its name was changed into Leningrad.

Modern culture in Europe, according to Historian Arnold J. Toynbee, was primarily a culture of middle class intelligentsia or the bourgeoisie. With the fall of bastille in French revolution, monarchy in the West got shaken and stood in fading glory. Long before the Bolshevik revolution, Russian bourgeoisie intelligentsia stood against the domination of the Petrine Czardom. It is from the great bourgeoisie writers like Gorky and Tolstoy that the revolutionary Russia drew inspiration. When the Petrine policy of westernization failed to deliver the goods, says historian Toynbee, 'a long-suppressed insistence on the uniqueness of Russia's destiny reasserted itself through the communist revolution'.<sup>5</sup>

The bourgeoisie culture brought the

2. Ibid., p. 5

3. Ibid., p. 7.

4. Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* (Abridgement of volumes VII—X) London: Oxford University Press, 1957) p. 152.

5. Ibid., p. 153.

trend of modernity in the West. One of the foremost factors in this modern culture was the 'ghost of Aristotle,' the spirit of critical enquiry and the scientific investigation into everything in life. With the rise of this critical spirit, the old religion was found to be wanting. Tolstoy's persistent abhorrence of 'miracles' and dogma is well known. Pre-communistic Russian intelligentsia developed the new humanism whose foundation was MAN and his basic nobility in the face of struggle for existence. The exploitation and impoverishment of the common man despite his undying nobility, under the Czarist regime, became the central theme round which the new socialistic system built up like a huge monolithic structure. A basic humanistic outlook on life, a deep respect for common man's essential goodness and greatness unspoiled by Czarist oppression, was the theme of the pre-revolutionary Russian writers like Maxim Gorky whose *Mother* stood out as the glorified symbol of Russian humanism.

But as the modernization of Russia began with the successful implementation of western technology, a new spiritual problem arose. The blasting success of technology had opened new avenues for the passage of western liberalism into the Russian soil. From the very beginning there was, as Toynbee shows, a marked 'determination of Russian souls to preserve their spiritual independence.'<sup>6</sup> This cry for 'spiritual independence' is being increasingly heard today in all materialistic societies. And 'spiritual independence' presupposes the existence of freedom both in the physical and spiritual levels of life. Toynbee wrote as early as 1955, 'If Russia's reaction against the West was to succeed, she must appear as the champion of a faith that could contend on equal terms with

liberalism'.<sup>7</sup> Recent policy of liberalization in Russia is, in a way, a vindication of the historian's vision of the emerging Russia of the future. Economic liberty is a must. But it is never enough. Man does not live by bread alone. The spirit of struggle, sacrifice, and dedication with which the Bolsheviks served their homeland is unknown today to the younger generation who are born in a society economically provided in many ways by the all-powerful state machinery. But the spirit remains starved despite all wealth. The recent hunger for the 'inner aspect of religion' in most of the affluent countries is a striking pointer to the failure of a mere economic or utilitarian society. Such societies are creating youth who are suffering, as Alvin Toffler writes, from a sense of 'perpetual purposelessness, which drives the younger generation to drug addiction and such other modern abuses like alcoholism, juvenile delinquency, psychological depression, suicide, vandalism and crime. The juvenile problem threatens, as Toffler points out, not merely the *how* of production, but the *why*.' 'The issues raised by it will reduce', continues Toffler, 'the great conflict of the twentieth century, the conflict between capitalism and communism, to comparative insignificance. For these issues sweep far beyond economic or political dogmas. They involve, as we shall see, nothing less than sanity, the human organism's ability to distinguish illusion from reality.'<sup>8</sup>

Theodore Roszak wrote in his book *Where the Wasteland Ends*, 'We can now recognize that the fate of the soul is the fate of the social order: that if the spirit within us withers so too will all the world we build around us.' *The Modern*

7. Ibid

8. Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (U.S.A.: National General Company, 1972) pp. 219-21.

6. Ibid, p. 152.

*experiment to live without religion has failed, and once we have understood this, we know what our post modern tasks really are*, writes E.F. Schumacher<sup>9</sup>. He thinks that the 'right direction' lies in what he calls the 'Yoga of a new consciousness', 'the applied science of religion' which help the scientist to manifest 'the divine power that dwells within him.'<sup>10</sup>

In 1896 when Swami Vivekananda was in London, his devotees desired him to visit Russia. Initial preparations were also made. The trip however did not materialize. Yet Vivekananda was very much drawn to this great country. In the same year Vivekananda was struck by the Russian Emperor's fascination to India which was evident in his book *Travel in the East of Nicholas II, Emperor of Russia*. Vivekananda read the book and sent at once to India the following passage from the book to be published in *Indian Mirror* and *Brahmavadin*.

To-morrow, India! Sleep deserts mine eyes. I vainly sought it in the balmy night, --in the gold and crimson of the rising sun, the dawn greets the promised land, where the heavens are pervaded with the charms of love, but passion is conquered by an unspeakable sadness—where life glows bright, yet all is as a dream, and breathes with beauty irresistible as death O land of daring dreams and soaring thought! Thou risest out of the azure deep, whose mournful moaning echoes sadly back the discord reigning in the weary heart India lies before us! Here holiness and peace appeared in visions unto men contemptuous of pleasures, since their age the people live the self-same life, yearning for the Divinity for freedom, and atonement. Here, where the earthly realm of sorrow borders on the heavens, and when the soul is crushed by unceasing torments this magic land calls us into

a world of wonders, into the realm of the eternal mysteries of boundless wisdom.<sup>11</sup>

In spite of Czar's appreciation of India, Swamiji, with his prophetic vision, was conscious of the fading glory of all monarchy, and especially of the pathetic failure of Czardom so far as the condition of the masses were concerned. When he was in London in 1896, one morning the newspapers brought the news of a catastrophe that had taken place during the coronation of Czar Nicholas II. A vast crowd of thousands of Russian peasants from far-off villages had gathered to procure an enamelled coronation cup promised for each of them. Arrangements were poor. A stampede followed in the disorganized crowd. 2,000 people died on the spot, others got crushed or trampled by one another. In desperation the police, failing to control the crowd, fired. When the news was read out to Vivekananda, at once he burst out in pain, 'What misery! What suffering! For the sake of one cup all those people left their villages and came to the city! And so many killed! How poor the country is! They have given their lives for a two-bit enamelled glass!' That morning Vivekananda became silent. He strolled restlessly to and fro, his heart still in agony for the unfortunate victims of a royal coronation.<sup>12</sup>

Already Vivekananda saw the foreshadowing of a great upheaval in Russia. In 1895 he had made the prophetic revelation to a group of chosen disciples in Thousand Island Park in America, 'The next great upheaval which is to bring about a new epoch will come from Russia or China. I can't quite see which, but it will be either

9. E.F. Schumacher, *A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Abacus, 1981) p. 159.

10. Ibid p. 104-5.

11. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West*, New Discoveries (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1986) Vol 4, p. 529.

12. Ibid., p. 146.

Russia or China'.<sup>13</sup> After twenty-two years came the explosion.

Vivekananda was fully aware of a historic antithesis rising against a self-centred Petrine Czardom. He was acquainted with communistic theories even before the first communist revolution did really happen in Russia in 1917. With his deep identification with suffering masses of India, and the negroes of the West, Vivekananda felt the urgent need of socialism for a total uplift of the masses. So far as our knowledge goes, in India Vivekananda was the first man who could declare—'I am a socialist'.

But Vivekananda also foresaw that the only philosophical or rational basis on which true socialism or communism could stand with confidence and satisfy the needs of humanity, was the Vedanta philosophy with its supreme respect to the infinite potentiality and divinity of each individual, high or low. After his return to India he spoke out these ideas to *Hindu* in 1897:

All the social upheavalists, at least the leaders of them, are trying to find that all their communistic or equalising theories must have a spiritual basis, and that spiritual basis is in Vedanta only. I have been told by several leaders, who used to attend my lectures, that they required Vedanta as the basis of the new order of things.<sup>14</sup>

And again to his English friend Mr. Sturdy, Vivekananda wrote, 'There is only one basis of well-being, social, political or spiritual—to know that I and my brothers are *one*.'<sup>15</sup> Whenever the advocates

of equality struggled to bring this equality on the physical plane by the use of force, the result was a failure. No two blades of grass in the universe are equal. At the same time behind the small ripple and the gigantic wave remains always the same infinite ocean. It is only at the spiritual level, behind the physical plane, that equality abides.

Deeply impressed by the wonderful sense of freedom amongst American men and women, Swamiji wrote to his Madras disciples: 'Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, of growth and wellbeing. Where it does not exist, the man, the race, the nation must go down.'<sup>16</sup>

\* \* \* \*

The first impact of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda in modern Russia was felt in the life and thoughts of Leo Tolstoy who got these ideas through letters or books sent to him. This was in the first decade of this century. From nineteen-sixties the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order started visiting Russia. Swami Dayananda and Swami Nityaswarupananda visited Russia before mid-sixties. Next to visit Russia was Swami Ranganathananda. His lecture delivered to the students and staff of the Moscow University is widely circulated in India in a small book with the title *Swami Vivekananda His Humanism*. But more extensive and intimate relation with the Russian thinkers was made when Swami Lokeshwarananda, Head of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, visited Russia twice in 1980s at the invitation of the Soviet Writers' Union. At once an intercultural exchange began between Russian intellectuals and the monks of the Ramakrishna Order. Dr. E. P. Chelisev, eminent scholar of USSR Academy of Sciences recently spent three months at the

13. Eastern and Western Admirers. *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1961) p. 203

14. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964) Vol. 5, pp. 212-3.

15. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (1977) Vol. 8, p. 350

16. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965) p. 63.

Calcutta Institute of Culture on a special study tour on Swami Vivekananda. Russian intellectuals, mostly writers, thinkers, and scientists began to pour in. In May 1986 a group of eminent Russian intellectuals met the Indian Press at the Institute of Culture, Calcutta. There they openly declared that 'religion is opium', but the religion of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is not opium. It is the true religion since it dehypnotizes man of all miracles, slavish dependence on rituals or ecclesiastical authorities. This year, in January 1987, fourteen top level Russian intellectuals and scientists again came to the Institute of Culture to participate in two seminars—one on Sri Ramakrishna and the other on global peace. They visited educational centres of the Ramakrishna Order, and finally its headquarters at Belur Math where they met the senior monks of the Order, including the President whom they requested for a trip to Russia. This trip by the Russian academicians was followed by Swami Hiranmayanandaji's trip to Russia in February 1987 where he was invited to participate in the International Forum on *Nuclear-Weapon-Free World for the Survival of Humanity*.

\* \* \* \*

But the finest fruit of this new Indo-Soviet Cultural exchange is a book entitled *Swami Vivekananda Studies in Soviet Union*. This book, released at the Institute of Culture on 11 March of this year, was compiled by the celebrated intellectual Dr. E. P. Chelisev. It is a collection of writings on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, by eminent Soviet intellectuals of today. The book, translated from Russian, is published by Swami Lokeshwarananda but for whose acquaintance with Soviet writers, scientists and academicians this volume could not have seen the light of the day.

The 450 page book shows the gradual

evolution of understanding about Vedanta and Vivekananda by the Russian scholars right from Tolstoy to present day Russian thinkers. During the last years of his life Tolstoy suddenly came in contact with the writings of Vivekananda and the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna. The great Russian savant was at once 'charmed by Vivekananda's writings'. According to Prof. Danilchuk of the Institute of International Relations of U.S.S.R. ministry of foreign affairs, 'Tolstoy considered Vivekananda a part of his inner world'.<sup>17</sup> After reading for the first time in 1908, Nazhivin's translations of Vivekananda's speech, Tolstoy wrote back to Nazhivin, 'The Hindu's article has left a great impression on me. This is unusually good. Here are my thoughts obscurely expressed'.<sup>18</sup> As Tolstoy's acquaintance with Vivekananda's idea deepened, the veil of obscurity was lifted. Tolstoy declared again and again, that Vivekananda belongs to the level of Buddha, Christ, Socrates, Plato, Kant and Schopenhauer.<sup>19</sup> From the very beginning Tolstoy had nourished an abhorrence of all miracles and miracle-mongering in religion. The wonderful rationality of Vivekananda's thoughts now entered deep into his thinking. 'Read Vivekananda's article on God, an excellent one. Should be translated. I myself thought of this itself', Tolstoy wrote. In Vivekananda he found 'prajna' the teachings of the sages. In 1909 when a third volume of Vivekananda's speeches and writings was presented to him, he remarked, 'the most eminent of modern Indian thinkers is Vivekananda and he should be published'.<sup>20</sup>

17. *Swami Vivekananda Studies in Soviet Union* Translated from the Russian by Harish C. Gupta (Calcutta: The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1987) p 175.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

19. *Ibid.*, p 159.

20. *Ibid.*, p 170.

Tolstoy had an instinctive abhorrence of miracles. In 1910 when Tolstoy read Annie Besant's *Theosophy and Modern Psychology*, he remarked, 'She rests on what is weak, what is erroneous, and Vivekananda on what is true.'<sup>21</sup> The absolutely rational interpretation of God and religion, according to Tolstoy, is Vivekananda's greatest contribution to India and the humanity at large. Tolstoy felt sad that 200 million Indians 'highly gifted in both spiritual and physical - strength' were overruled by a handful of Europeans 'who are immeasurably lower than those whom they rule' 'The reason thereof', said Tolstoy, 'as seen... from extremely interesting works of the Hindu writer Swami Vivekananda is the absence of a rational religious doctrine.' Vivekananda himself brought this rational religious doctrine. About Ramakrishna Tolstoy first came to know from the extracts from Max Muller's book on Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna's wisdom overwhelmed him. He wrote, 'His selection of the "sayings" is wonderful. Ramakrishna died fifty years ago(?). The most brilliant wise man!'<sup>22</sup>

Tolstoy died before the *Complete Works of Vivekananda* and the full biography of Ramakrishna were available to him. Today's Soviet writers have the opportunity of studying Ramakrishna-Vivekananda in depth. 'Interest in the life and work of this remarkable patriot thinker and social leader (Vivekananda) has been growing from day to day all the world over including the Soviet Union', writes Prof. Danilchuk. Last year when someone asked Prof. Danilchuk in Hyderabad why the Soviet people were turning to the Neo-Vedanta of Vivekananda instead of Christianity, the Professor at once gave a detailed idea about how the true base of Russian

language and culture had always been Indo-Aryan, and not Judeo-Semetic. A large number of the Russian words have pure sanskrit base. The religion of a Father in heaven was a later introduction, he said, while the 'inner aspect of religion', the religion of the undying spirit in man, was embedded deep in the Russian soil.

Dr. E. P. Chelisev sees in Vivekananda a 'socialist', an 'anti imperialist', and a 'humanist'. He writes, 'The humanistic ideal of Vivekananda is to certain extent ideal with Gorkay's 'May with a capital letter.' Vivekananda's new humanism, according to Chelisev, 'played an important part in the general upsurge of national consciousness and the struggle of the Indian people for independence.'<sup>23</sup>

While Chelisev cannot agree with the 'idealistic basis of Vivekananda's humanism' and calls Vivekananda's socialism 'Utopian Socialism', he can, nevertheless, not deny the power he exerted for the rejuvenation of masses in India. V. S. Kostyuchenko, Reader in philosophy makes a bolder statement, 'Through the haze of romantic illusions and utopian desires Vivekananda was nonetheless able to discern the contours of the future with adequate clarity—and, at times, even simply with striking precision.'<sup>24</sup> This 'precise' and clear vision about the global rise of the masses strikes the Russian thinkers with a genuine reverence for the prophetic dimensions in Vivekananda's ideas.

Chelisev finds that Vivekananda stressed the 'inner aspect of religion'<sup>25</sup> instead of rituals. It is with the ritualistic or the 'secondary details' of religion, as Vivekananda defined, that all differences and conflicts between religions have arisen throughout the history. He finds in

<sup>21</sup>. Ibid., p 171.

<sup>22</sup>. Ibid, p. 164.

<sup>23</sup>. Ibid., pp. 209-11.

<sup>24</sup>. Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>25</sup>. Ibid, p. 32.



Vivekananda's stress on the moral-spiritual aspects of religion rather than on rituals, a strong similarity with the present-day Russian thoughts. Chelisev writes that Vivekananda thought it 'possible to control the social-moral vices of contemporary Indian society with the help of 'spirituality' whose base, according to his views, was in the moral-religious principles of Vedanta. The moral progress, therefore, in Vivekananda's notion, as also for the Russian *narodniks* (populists), was wholly dependent on the efforts of 'theoretician-moralists'.<sup>26</sup> Chelisev also says that Vivekananda was the first to think that 'India must bring to the West the saving "spirituality"'.<sup>27</sup> 'Strength for Vivekananda is a complex formation, a peculiar identity of the inner and the outer, the spiritual and the physical', says Chelisev.<sup>28</sup> Obviously such rational ideas appeals to the present-day theoreticians of Russia.

V.S. Kostyuchenko finds three motifs in Vivekananda's works -- *Reformation*, *Enlightenment* and *Restoration*. The motif of *Reformation* is 'universal religion, putting an end to religious discords, superstitions, fanaticism. The motif of *Enlightenment* is reason, science, education, shaking the stagnant forms of social existence. And lastly, the motif of *Restoration* is the humanist idea of 'free man on free earth'.<sup>29</sup>

According to Komarav, a Sector Head in U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Vivekananda is the first person in Indian history who realized the failure of 'feudalism' and the 'bourgeois culture' to bring an effective education of the masses. 'This conclusion', says Komarav, 'for the first time in India distinctly formulated by Vivekananda only, was a main attainment of the progressive

Indian social thought before the first world war'.<sup>30</sup>

Dr. R. B. Rybakov, another scholar from the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, in his 144-page essay on the *Reformation of Hinduism* deals mainly with the uniqueness of Ramakrishna. He finds in Ramakrishna a fulfilment of Karl. Marx's thoughts on religion. Karl. Marx wrote about Martin Luther, '...religion was for him the *direct truth*, so to say *nature*.' Quoting this line, Rybakov writes, 'The words of Marx, said about Luther, are fully applicable to the former. For Ramakrishna, religion was the highest truth. For the rationalist Vivekananda, it is like science, with no place for any thing secret, mystical, and supernatural'.<sup>31</sup> Yet Ramakrishna was neither anti-world nor anti-man. 'In the midst of Ramakrishna's God-absorption', Rybakov writes, 'the thought of reality of the surrounding world is a substantial part of Ramakrishna's message,' which drove 'automatically' 'to the conclusion of desirability and need of active work'.<sup>32</sup> In Ramakrishna Rybakov finds four dominant characteristics: 'the tendency to reconcile the contradictions of Hinduism, the attempt to create internally a logical system, and also to bring together the viewpoints of reformers and the orthodox, putting forward the idea of validity of every religion'.<sup>33</sup>

Rybakov finds in anti-imperialist Vivekananda's sharp indictments of feudalistic exploitation and his clarion call to India for shaking off its century-old lethargy and diffidence, an enactment of Karl Marx's ideas: 'Shame is already a revolution of its own kind.... Shame is an anger of its own kind, only directed within. And if a

26. Ibid., p. 66.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., p. 51.

29. Ibid., p. 221.

30. Ibid., p. 121.

31. Ibid., p. 398.

32. Ibid., p. 368.

33. Ibid., p. 397.

whole nation really were to have a sense of shame, it would be like a lion who contracts his whole self, getting prepared for the jump.<sup>34</sup> India did stand up like a springing lion at Vivekananda's words.

The book is, indeed, epoch-making, in the sense that it heralds the beginning of a new epoch of closer relation and deeper understanding between Russia and India, an understanding which goes deeper than understandings at mere political, diplomatic or even economic level. It is now a cultural and spiritual understanding between the two great nations. And the common base that slowly emerges is the religion of Vedanta as preached and practised by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Ramakrishna's love for God in all religions and God in all men and women, and Vivekananda's unfailing respect to the Divine, even in the low and the sinner, unites today man with man and nations with nations.

Vedanta knew the utter unreality of a golden millennium in our external life. It is at a higher level of consciousness, as Vivekananda pointed out, that man sees the world 'deified'. 'An objective heaven or millennium therefore', wrote Vivekananda, 'has existence only in the fancy but a subjective one is already in existence. The musk-deer after vain search for the cause of the scent of the musk at last will have to find it in himself.'<sup>35</sup>

Modern life, says William Faulkner, is 'a frantic steeplechase towards nothing'. Despite prosperity, materialistic societies today suffer from a nihilistic despair. President Nixon's statement about affluent America rings in our ears, 'Never has a nation seemed to have more and enjoyed

it less.'<sup>36</sup> *Civitas Dei*, the kingdom of God, slowly appears to modern man as something not available in any projected or promised future, but as the spiritual infinitude and innate divinity within us. 'So far as this *Civitas Dei* enters into time dimension at all', writes Toynbee, 'it is not a dream of the future, but a spiritual reality penetrating the present'.<sup>37</sup> Religion is *here and now*, said Vivekananda. The promised millennium is within us, in our innate divinity. And the function of religion is to manifest it.

Vivekananda's clarion call to Indians to embrace the *Practical Vedanta* and to assert their soul force, resulted in a sudden upsurge of individual and national faith. The democratic-socialistic pattern of thinking in post-independent India based on the Practical Vedanta of Vivekananda, did push to nothingness the feudal supremacy and the caste-privileges of the past, opening out thereby educational, cultural, religious and spiritual privileges to all Indians irrespective of caste, creed, and nationality. Vivekananda's call for 'renunciation and service' evoked tremendous response from many genuine souls belonging to the upper classes in India. On the sacrifice and service of these great national leaders, India has today emerged into a world power. 'Renunciation and Service' is not just a spiritual ideal. It proved an epoch-making power capable of creating new social order free from privileged classes. Before this power India bowed down twice, once when Ashoka embodied this ideal in his own life, and next when the ideal again became burning and embodied in the life and teachings of Vivekananda.

History is replete with stories of three kinds of saviours. Saviours with the pen,

34. Ibid., pp 393-4.

35. Letter of Swami Vivekananda, dt. 1 Nov.. 1896.

36. Alvin Toffler, *The Adaptive Corporation* p. 100.

37. Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, op. cit., p. 529.

like Rousseau and others, have inspired humanity with visions of golden millenniums. Saviours with the sword, like Alexander, Chengiz Khan, Hitler and Napoleon, have sought to conquer nations and consolidate kingdoms. Humanity got bread, along with pools of blood and mountain of skulls. But like Adam and Eve expelled from Eden, it was yet to find its 'place of rest and providence'. It is time for Saviours as Son of God, like Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, to lead us today through the path of religious pluralism, and service to the Divine within all members of our human family, to a world of peace and harmony. Vivekananda's words uttered in the Chicago Parliament of Religions nearly a century ago ring like a prophecy for today's war-tormented world seeking peace:

If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this. It has proved to the world that holiness, purity, and charity are not

the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: 'Help and not Fight', 'Assimilation and not Destruction', 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension'.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Soviet President Gorbachev's historic attempt to unite humanity through this International Forum is a great stride towards a global solidarity. At this significant moment when the Soviet Government, as a super-power, is making an all-out effort to ensure global peace, the rise of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda above the horizon of Russia promises a turning point and a boon to humanity as a whole.

<sup>38</sup>. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1977) Vol. 1, p 24.

## INDIRA GANDHI AWARD FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION FOR 1985

### *Acceptance Speech*

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

#### 1. *Introductory*

I am thankful to the Advisory Committee of the Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration for choosing me to receive the first Award instituted in the name, and in honour, of our late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, whose death happened due to her upholding of National Integration. According to our great ancient law-giver Manu, the seeker of spiritual values should run away from all honour

and praise (1.162): *Sammānāt brāhmaṇo nityam udvijeta*. But the name of Indira Gandhi, and its very noble purpose, influenced me to accept this Award. The Award refers to my work in the fields of national integration, and understanding and fellowship among religious groups. The Award money will be utilized to serve our weaker sections, our tribals in the Bastar District of Madhya Pradesh, through the Ramakrishna Mission.

My knowledge of India tells me that

there are many distinguished individuals and institutions in our country who are silently working in these important fields. If the members of the Committee have chosen me to be the first recipient of the Award, I accept it on behalf of all them ; and let us hope that such persons and institutions will steadily multiply in the coming years ; and they are there among all communities and sections of our vast population. That means that national awareness and patriotic loyalty is present in a good measure in our people ; and this has been proved in times of national crisis in the recent past. What we have to do is to create political, economic, and social conditions and circumstances which will help achieve total national integration, which will make all our people experience the pride and privilege of being citizens of the democratic republic of India ; and this democratic nation-building deriving sanction from all sections of the Indian people, is the challenge before the government and the people of India today.

## 2. *My Philosophic and Spiritual Background*

If the Award recognizes in me the precious values of national integration and religious harmony, it will be a rewarding study, for our nation, to understand the formative forces that led me up to it, to be acquainted with my philosophic and spiritual background. Even though brought up in a caste-ridden and feudal social environment, I broke all caste distinctions even from my boyhood and intimately befriended, for example, an old Pariah couple tenant of my family ; they wept when I left my village to join the Ramakrishna Order in 1926. I also established intimate and happy relations with my Christian fellow-students in our school at Allur, near Trichur, in Kerala. Long after, in Karachi in Pakistan, my one old Pathan

watchman, and two Sindhi Muslim youths working as cook and house keeper, wept, when I took final leave of them, in 1948, to take charge of our Delhi centre. It is a great experience to give love to, and receive love from, men and women and children of all communities and races.

After reading *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, and the Life and Works of Swami Vivekananda, from my 14th year onwards, the universal attitudes and the humanist passion generated from such study overcame any lingering communal and caste distinctions from my mind. Thousands of our patriots have been so transformed by the study of Vivekananda literature ; and they fought for freedom and achieved it in 1947. During a visit to the Belur Math, the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, on 6 February 1921, Mahatma Gandhi had said (quoted in *World Thinkers on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda*, p. 44):

I have come here to pay my homage and respect to the revered memory of Swami Vivekananda, whose birthday is being celebrated today. I have gone through his Works very thoroughly and, after having gone through them, the love that I had for my country became a thousand-fold. I ask you, young men, not to go away empty-handed without imbibing something of the spirit of the place where Swami Vivekananda lived and died

When I was in Gulmarg in Kashmir in 1946, I one day walked into the adjacent house where I learnt that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was staying, along with Mrs. Indira Gandhi and children, Sheikh Abdullah, Moulana Abul Kalam Azad, Mr. Asaf Ali, and Mr. Iftikharuddin of Lahore. Panditji, who was then busy with the INA trials, received me and we had a forty-minute discussion during which, when I said: Panditji, you have dismissed Swami Vivekananda in your autobiography in one sentence, that 'Vivekananda and others... gave us a measure of self-respect again,

and roused up our dormant pride in our past', he asked: Have I said so? But now I have changed my estimate of him and of several other teachers like Śaṅkarācārya; you will find my new estimate in my book, now in the press: *The Discovery of India*. After tea with Sheikh Abdullah and others, I took leave. On returning to Karachi, I read his new book and found insightful studies of the Indian cultural heritage, with about 5 pages devoted to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. About Vivekananda, he writes (p. 400):

Rooted in the past, and full of pride in India's heritage, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems, and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present.

Later, speaking in Delhi a few years later he said (*Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, 1960, pp. 4-13):

I do not know how many of the younger generation read the speeches and the writings of Swami Vivekananda. But I can tell you that many of my generation were very powerfully influenced by him, and I think that it will do a great deal of good to the present generation if they also went through Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches.

If you read Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches, the curious thing you will find is that they are not old. It was told 56 years ago, and they are fresh today because, what he wrote, or spoke about, dealt with fundamental matters and aspects of our problems, or the world's problems. Therefore, they do not become old; they are fresh even though you read them now.

So what Swami has written and said is of interest, and must interest us, and is likely to influence us, for a long time to come. He was no politician in the ordinary sense of the word and yet he was, I think, one of the great founders—if you like, you may use any other word—of the national modern movement of India; and a great number of people who took more or less an active part in that movement, in a later date, drew their inspiration from

Swami Vivekananda. Directly or indirectly, he has powerfully influenced the India of today. And I think that our younger generation will take advantage of this fountain of wisdom, of spirit, of fire, that flows through Swami Vivekananda.

Men like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, men like Swami Vivekananda, and men like Mahatma Gandhi, are great unifying forces, great constructive geniuses of the world, not only in regard to particular teachings that they taught, but their approach to the world and their conscious and unconscious influence on it is of the most vital importance to us.

### 3. *The Pure Message of Love and Service*

What is the type of influence that radiates from Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and the Holy Mother Sarada Devi? A pure message of love and service. They realized man as the 'child of the Immortal', *amṛtasya putrah*, as the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* proclaimed it thousands of years ago in this blessed land of India. During his various spiritual experiments in the temple garden of Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna practically experimented, along with his twelve years of scientific experiments and experiences in the great world religions, with the rooting out of caste pride in a unique way, which holds vital lessons to the feudal caste-ridden section of our population, who still oppress our scheduled castes and tribes. He a *brāhmaṇa* himself, used to stealthily enter a nearby untouchable's house, at dead of night, and clean his toilet and wipe it with his flowing hair, praying to the Divine Mother all the time. 'O Mother, please remove the least trace of caste superiority from my mind; make me a servant of all!' The Holy Mother Sarada Devi fed the Muslim labourer Amjad and removed the leaf and cleaned the place with a universal mother-heart which embraced, in its pure love, Christians, Muslims, and Hindus of all castes. During his *parivrājaka*, or wandering monk, period

of life in all parts of India, Vivekananda lived in the houses of princes, peasants, untouchables, Muslims, and others, and was deeply pained to see the poverty, illiteracy and suffering of our weaker sections of all communities, and the heartlessness and exploitation of these weaker sections by our upper classes. Deploring the low level to which man had reduced man in his country, he later wrote from America to his disciples in India (*The Complete Works*, Vol. 5, p. 16):

They (our upper classes) little dream of the ages of tyranny—mental, moral, and physical—that has reduced the image of God (that is man) to a mere beast of burden, the emblem of the Divine Mother (that is woman) to a slave to bear children, and life itself a curse!

It is these experiences that made him preach to our people the message of a Practical Vedānta, of a spiritual humanism, consisting of a love of God flowing into a love and service of man, irrespective of caste or sex or communal differences, and tender that service in a spirit of reverence and friendliness, seeing the same divinity in all of them. He summoned our upper classes to go down to their weaker sections and bring them up. He proclaimed that 'the national ideals of India are renunciation and service; intensify her in those channels, the rest will take care of themselves.' In his famous lecture on *Vedānta* in Lahore in 1897, he referred to casteism and untouchability as sin and summoned the nation to 'wipe off this blot' (*ibid.*, Vol. 3, pp. 429-31):

Young men of Lahore, understand this, therefore, this great sin, hereditary and national, is on our shoulders. There is no hope for us. You may make thousands of societies, twenty-thousand political assemblages, fifty-thousand institutions. These will be of no use until there is that sympathy, that love, that heart, that thinks for all; until Buddha's heart comes once more into India; until the words of the Lord

Krishna are brought to their practical use, there is no hope for us....

Therefore, young men of Lahore, raise once more that mighty banner of Advaita (philosophy and spirituality of nonseparateness); for on no other ground can you have that wonderful love, until you see that the same Lord is present everywhere. Unfurl that banner of love! 'Arise, Awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.' Arise, arise once more, for nothing can be done without renunciation. If you want to help others, your little self must go. In the words of the Christians—you cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time. . Throw away everything, even your own salvation, and go and help others. The nation is sinking; the curse of un-numbered millions is on our heads—those to whom we have been giving ditch-water to drink, when they have been dying of thirst, and while the perennial river of water was flowing past; the un-numbered millions whom we have allowed to starve in sight of plenty; the un-numbered millions to whom we have talked of Advaita and whom we have hated with all our strength. .. *Wipe off this blot!* 'Arise and awake.' What matters it if this little life goes? Everyone has to die, the saint or the sinner, the rich or the poor. The body never remains for anyone. Arise and awake and be perfectly sincere. *Our insincerity in India is awful!* What we want is character, that steadiness and character that make a man cling on to a thing like grim death.

Speaking in Madras in the same year on *The Future of India*, he said (*ibid.*, p. 297):

The duty of every aristocracy is to dig its own grave; and the sooner it does so, the better. The more it delays, the more it will fester, and the worse death it will die.

Writing from Japan on 10 July 1893 to his Indian disciples, Vivekananda thundered (*ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 10):

Come, be men! Kick out the priests who are always against progress, because they would never mend; their hearts would never become big. They are the offspring of centuries of superstition and tyranny. Root out priest-craft first. Come, be men.. Do you love man? Do you love your country? Then come, let us



struggle for higher and better things. Look not back, but forward! India wants the sacrifice of at least a thousand of her young men—men, mind, not brutes, ... to struggle unto life and death to bring about a new state of things—sympathy for the poor, and bread to their hungry mouths, enlightenment to the people at large—and struggle unto death to make men of them, who have been brought to the level of beasts by the tyranny of your forefathers!

And, earlier in the same year, landing on the soil of India from Sri Lanka, at Ramnad, in response to a tumultuous national welcome which no king, emperor, or military conqueror, of any country, had ever received, he visualized the awakening of modern India, and the unfolding of the most glorious chapter of her long and impressive history, in his very opening words (*ibid.*, Vol. 3, pp. 145-46):

The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking, ... the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, or the preverted will not see, that she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep, long, sleep. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more, no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet!

The words and the sentiment that Vivekananda conveyed through his letter from America to the then Maharaja of Mysore in 1894, and which produced a bumper harvest of *living* people, a harvest of patriots and servants of the nation, in pre-freedom India, must now be burnt into the souls of our people of post-freedom India, so that they also may become *living* people by making service, not exploitation, the normal form of interpersonal and inter-group relationship throughout our nation (*ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 363):

This life is short, the vanities of the world are transient, but they alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive!

Dealing with the impact on India of these and many other similar utterances of Vivekananda, Romain Rolland says in his critical and insightful book, *Life of Vivekananda* pp. 124-25):

Imagine the thunderous reverberations of these words! The storm passed; it scattered its cataracts of water and fire over the plain, and its formidable appeal to the Force of the Soul, to the God sleeping in man and His illimitable possibilities! I can see the Mage erect, his arm raised, like Jesus above the tomb of Lazarus in Rembrandt's engraving: with energy flowing from his gesture of command to raise the dead and bring him to life.

Did the dead arise? Did India, thrilling to the sound of his words, reply to the hope of her herald? The Master's rough scourge made her turn for the first time in her sleep, and for the first time, the heroic trumpet sounded, in the midst of her dream, the Forward March of India, conscious of her God. She never forgot it. From that day, the awakening of the torpid Colossus began. If the generation that followed, saw, three years after Vivekananda's death, the revolt of Bengal, the prelude to the great movement of Tilak and Gandhi, if India today (in the 1920's) has definitely taken part in the collective action of organized masses, it is due to the initial shock, to the mighty, "Lazarus, come forth!" of the Message from Madras.

And, referring to the character and impact of Vivekananda's words, Romain Rolland says (*ibid.*, p. 162):

His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports, must have been produced when, in burning words, they issued from the lips of the hero!

It is the deep study of this strengthening, purifying, and unifying literature by me, and by hundreds of other youths like me, belonging to various sections of the Indian society and of many countries abroad, that



impelled me and them to join the Rama-krishna-Vivekananda movement, either as monks, or as nuns, or as dedicated lay workers, inspired by the vision and the ideal given to it by Swami Vivekananda: *Ātmano moksārtham jagat hitāya ca*—‘for the spiritual liberation of oneself and for the welfare of the world’. This ideal unifies the spiritual heights of mysticism and the man-ward flow of humanism; it unifies the sacred and the secular, man’s inner life and man’s outer life.

Vivekananda’s philosophy and spirituality of service cuts across all communal, caste, and other differences, and shines as a universal spiritual religion or philosophy of life, acceptable not only to all believers but to all atheists and agnostics as well. This universality arises from its stress on character, on the humanist passion, and on lived spiritual experience, and not on mere belief and dogma. The *Mahābhārata* conveys this message in a verse giving the teaching of a merchant by name Tulādhāra to a Brahmin ascetic by name Jājali (12.254.9):

*Sarvesām yah suhṛnnityam  
sarvesām ca hite ratah;  
Karmaṇā manasā vācā  
sa dharmam veda jājale—*

‘That person knows *dharmā*, O Jājali, who is always the friend of all people, and who is engaged in ensuring the welfare of all people through action, thought, and speech.’

#### 4. Swami Akhandananda: The Pioneer of Service

The pioneer who implemented Vivekananda’s philosophy of service was Swami Akhandananda, another direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. After rendering much service to the weaker sections in Rajasthan

in 1893-94, this monk, possessed of a Buddha’s heart, was on a pilgrimage in North Bengal and reached a village called Dadpur, whence began his blazing of a trail of service of the poor and the suffering people, which soon became one of the important characteristics of the Rama-krishna-Vivekananda movement. To narrate this small beginning of a big service programme, it is best to quote Swami Akhandananda’s own words from his book (*From Holy Wanderings to SERVICE OF GOOD IN MAN*, p. 157):

Early in the morning, I washed my hands and face in the Gangā and was coming towards the bazaar, when I found a Muslim girl of about fourteen, clad in dirty rags, weeping bitterly. She held on her waist an earthen jar, the bottom of which had given away. On seeing me, she said: ‘Father, there is famine, we have nothing at home to eat. We had in our home only this earthen jar and two earthen pans. There is no second vessel at home to hold water. For fear lest mother beat me, I am crying. I took her with me and bought her an earthen jar worth two pice and some fried rice of the same value. Hardly had the shopkeeper paid me back the small change of three annas, when there gathered at the shop some twelve boys and girls of the neighbouring village Maradighi and piteously appealed for help, saying, that they had nothing to eat. I at once asked the vendor to distribute among them fried rice worth three annas.

The sight of such famine-stricken people, in village after village, made him give up his pilgrimage programme and conduct efficient famine relief services, which earned the love of the people and high praise from the local British Government officers, and finally consummated itself in the founding of a permanent orphanage in Sargachi near Murshidabad.

#### 5. Our Educated Need a Re-education

There is no doubt that we can end all caste conflicts in India—and they are a

blot on our democracy and weaken it— if our educated people become *re-educated* in national and humanistic attitudes, by the Vivekananda literature. They need that re-education. It is rare to see anyone who has caught the inspiration of Vivekananda indulging in caste conflicts. A touch of his Practical Vedānta will make such people ashamed of their erstwhile feudalistic and anti-human attitudes and activities and turn to the service and uplift of, what they will then realize as, their weaker fellow-citizens. The widespread diffusion of Vivekananda's ideas will generate a current of ethical and humanistic impulses, which will sweep over the nation and 'wipe off the blot' on our society. It will make our people realize their democratic responsibilities and discharge them in a humanistic spirit, and thus less and less prone to corruption and other social malpractices.

When such a change will come over our people, they will themselves initiate social amelioration measures, without depending entirely on the state. When I was taken through the sprawling Dharavi slum in Bombay recently, this very idea crossed my mind. Much of the wealth of India is concentrated in Bombay. If a dedicated group of Bombay industrialists and businessmen join together and raise a hundred crore fund from the city, and attack the Dharavi slum problem, taking the help of the government to overcome technical difficulties, the present dismal Dharavi will be transformed into a healthy, clean, and fully equipped colony, with many 2 or 3 storey apartments, schools, playgrounds, and parks, brightening the lives of the thousands of its families. What an environmental revolution it will mean for Bombay! And what healthy repercussions such an achievement, through public initiative, will have on other urban areas in India! This is the type of awakening that our people will have from the

widespread study of, and imbibing the inspiration from, Vivekananda literature. All these are part and parcel of a fully conceived and implemented national integration revolution, where man in India realizes himself or herself as a dynamic citizen of democratic India and not its passive subject or cynical critic!

#### 6. *Root Nourishment of Our Secular Democracy*

I had said at the beginning of this talk that we have to create conditions and circumstances conducive to the achievement of total national integration. I have so far discussed the citizen's part in this vital field, and dealt with only the vicious caste problem. But the Government also has a vital part to play in this field, and in the equally vicious communal problem. The talk of national integration has been going on for a few years now; there is also the national integration council, which meets whenever serious communal troubles take place. Some of its suggestions, for achieving integration, like government functions abstaining from lighting lamps at inaugural ceremonies, sound cheap and meaningless; if breaking a coconut on a ship to launch it is bad, is India to adopt the Western method of smashing a wine bottle on the ship! There are certain cultural practices in countries which are their age-old inheritance; practices like lighting a lamp are simple and harmless and universal, since the human heart yearns to move from darkness to light.

No, the nation must strengthen secularism, in order to achieve total national integration, through more fundamental political approaches. The first truth that our democratic state must realize is that *a secular state and communal political parties can never go together*. A secular state should have only secular political

parties *at all levels*. This is the first step to be taken. Such a step alone will help to throw up national leaders from all communities ; in the present set-up, national-minded leaders have no chance to rise and to lead, but only communal-minded ones. In a truly secular democracy, any member elected to a legislature must represent the interests of the members of all communities of his or her electorate. Why should not a Muslim member of Parliament or Assembly or Panchayat represent the political and economic interests of non-Muslims as much as of Muslims ? Why not a Christian represent the interests of non-Christians, and a Hindu those of non-Hindus ? Until political conditions are created for secular-minded members of all religious communities to represent the political, economic, and social interests of each other, and the same applies to the government servants also, our democratic state will not be truly secular, and national integration will remain a far-away dream.

Our experience so far has been: three feet forward and four feet backward! Conditions must be created, by appropriate government policies, for members of all religious communities in India to feel that, in the secular sphere of life, they are primarily citizens of the free democratic state of India, and that all others are their fellow-citizens whom it is their privilege to serve ; and in all non-secular spheres of life, their own religious community will claim their special loyalty and service ; and the Constitution and the State will encourage the same.

A second step to be taken is the fulfilment of the Constitutional provision of a Common National Civil Code, which will consummate the national integration process. If political wisdom demands that this should wait till a wide diffusion of education creates a

demand for it from sections that are not now ready for it, let it be so. In a democracy, legislation must be preceded and backed by public education.

The above are the only means to avoid the current evils of communalism. Communalism, in the Indian context, is religion subordinated to politics, making both religion and politics narrow, sectarian, and divisive. The words community and communal, which are rich and meaningful terms in sociology, have become frightful and dismal in the Indian context, in which communal religion and politics mean often nationally disintegrating attitudes and communal conflicts. Everyone in our country today must feel sad and ashamed at the recurring communal violence and conflicts, when citizens kill fellow-citizens, mostly innocent and poor ones. With all our national integration councils and law and order measures, we are not seeing any reduction in these ugly and shameful social phenomena, but only increase in range and turbulence. People of different communities, who lived for ages in friendly attitudes in the same locality, are now forced to carve out separate localities for themselves. The remedies applied so far, it is evident, are only cosmetic ; they are like watering the twigs and leaves of a tree. The whole tree is nourished only when its root-system is watered. We need a root nourishment of our secular democracy. It is this root-nourishment of secularism and national integration that will be provided to our infant democratic state, *when the nation's political processes are de-linked from all communal-religious affiliations*. Once this is achieved, by mutual discussions between all political parties, and with suitable constitutional amendments, I have no doubt that communal conflicts will decrease day by day and, eventually, totally disappear, and national integration will become an accomplished fact.

### 7. True Secularism Will Release the Spirituality of Our Religions

In such a political development, the gains of the various religions of our country will be equally tremendous. It will help to release the spiritual energies of love and human concern of our various religions. Instead of remaining subordinate to a sectarian politics and losing its own soul, all our religions will develop into dynamic and creative spiritual forces, imparting that breadth of outlook and character-energy to their followers, which we miss coming out of our various religions today. Swami Vivekananda reminded us that, so far as India is concerned, 'national union in India is the union of her scattered spiritual forces'. It is only character-energy, coming out of the spirituality of religion, that can accelerate human development in our nation. How many evils on the other hand, are being done in the name of an *ethnical* concept of religion! Anyone can be wicked and religious at the same time. Did the teachers of any world religions intend this to happen? *We have to realize the primacy of the spiritual dimension of religion over its ethnical.* The ethnical dimension of religion is that in which you were born; you had no say in the matter; but the scientific and spiritual dimension is what you freely choose and inquire and grow into. No one is born into a science; it is choosing that makes one a scientist. Writing to an American friend in March 1895, Swami Vivekananda said (*The Complete Works*, Vol. 6, p. 303, sixth edition):

My Master (Sri Ramakrishna) used to say that these names as Hindu, Christian, etc. stand as great bars to all brotherly feelings between man and man. We must try to break them down first. They have lost all their good powers, and now stand only as baneful influences, under whose black magic, even the best of us behave

like demons. Well, we will have to work hard and must succeed. Those that want to help mankind must take their own pleasure and pain, name and fame, and all sorts of interests, and make a bundle of them, and throw them into the sea, and then come to the Lord. This is what all the masters said *and did*.

Writing later to Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret Noble) in London in June 1896, he said (*ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 489):

My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life. This world is in chains of superstition. I pity the oppressed, whether man or woman, and I pity more the oppressors. One idea that I see clear as daylight is that misery is caused by *ignorance* and nothing else. Who will give the world light? Sacrifice, in the past, has been the Law; it will be, alas, for ages to come. The earth's bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of the many, for the welfare of all. Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and pity.

Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like thunderbolt.'

Such words, as given above, can be found in the utterances of the world's mystics who represent the scientific and spiritual dimension of religion—Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim Sufi, Sikh, or Jewish. The famous Persian sufi and poet, Jalalud-Din Rumi exclaims:

In each human spirit is a Christ concealed,  
To be helped or hindered, to be hurt  
or healed;  
If from any human soul you lift the veil,  
You will find a Christ there hidden  
without fail.

India has been, throughout the ages, and is destined to be in the modern period also, the land of religious harmony and toleration. The people of India respect all saints, t

whatever religion he or she may belong. And all mystics and saints have been universal and human, and many of the lovable ones among them have suffered persecution, and even death, from the ethnical communalistic dimension of their own religion. Sri Ramakrishna's contribution to the modern world is to strengthen this broad, spiritual, and humanistic dimensions of all religions. The Indian atmosphere is most suited to release the spiritual energies of all religions, making for work-efficiency, character-energy, and social harmony. In his beautiful song on Sri Ramakrishna in Bengali, the revolutionary Muslim poet of Bengal, the late Kazi Nazrul Islam, says:

*Satya-yuger puṇya-smṛti kalite ānile tumi  
tāpas ;*

*Mandire, masjidē, girjāv, pūjile  
brahme sama-śraddhāy ;*

*Tava nām-mākha prem-niketane  
bhariyache tāi tri-samsār—*

'You brought the memory of Satya-yuga, golden age, in this Kali-yuga, iron age, O saintly one: you worshipped the One God, with equal fervour, in the Hindu temple, in the Muslim mosque, and in the Christian church ; it is for this that the whole world is filled with the reservoir of Love that your name embodies.'

#### 8 *Samavāya eva sādhuḥ*

From the Vedic times, up to Sri Ramakrishna in our own age, there has been a continuous succession of sages and saints, whose vision of the One behind the Many had initiated and sustained a cultural and religious experiment in our country, of Unity in Diversity, instead of a dull, dead uniformity. One product of this vision was toleration understood as *universal acceptance*, which made India the land of

many religions, cultures, languages, and customs, living side by side in harmony, and held together by that subtle silken thread of fundamental spiritual unity. This constitutes the most important constituent of India's ancient and continuing wisdom. This vision did not remain merely with the sages and seers, but soon influenced the political and social policy of big empires as well as small states. The most famous example of this is the Mauryan empire of Aśoka of the third century before Christ. His XII Rock Edict, as well as his own personality as pointed out by H.G. Wells in his first work on world history, has no parallel in the history of any country.

King Priyadarsin, the beloved of the gods, reverences persons of all-sects, ascetics, and householders, by gifts and various forms of reverence.

But the beloved of the gods does not value either gifts or reverential offerings, so much as that of an increase of spiritual strength of the followers of all religions. One who reverences one's own religion, and disparages that of another, from devotion to one's own religion and to glorify it over all other religions, does, by so doing, injure one's own religion more certainly.

It is, verily, *Concord Among Religions* that is right and proper, as persons of other ways of thinking may thereby hear the *Dharma* and serve its cause

The original text in Sanskrit is high wisdom couched in the fewest words: *Samavāya eva sādhuḥ*. *Samavāya*, concord, *eva*, alone, *sādhuḥ*, is right and proper.

#### 9. *March of Integration from the National to the International*

My education in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda philosophy and spirituality, through the Ramakrishna Order, did not stop with work for national integration and inter-religious harmony within India. It reached out to the international and human.

While expounding Indian culture and philosophy in America for four years, when an English friend wrote to Vivekananda so as to say: How long will you be there? Please return to your Mother India where plenty of work is awaiting you. Vivekananda sent a reply dated 9 August 1895, which breathes his international interests and sympathies as well as his universal spiritual humanism (*The Complete Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 349-50, 1959 edition):

Doubtless, I do love India. But every day, my sight grows clearer. What is India or England or America to us? We are the servants of that God who, by the ignorant, is called *man*. He who pours water at the root, does he not water the whole tree?

There is but one basis of well-being—social, political, or spiritual—to know that I and my brother are *one*. This is true for all countries and all people. And Westerners, let me say, will realize it more quickly than Orientals who have almost exhausted themselves in formulating the idea and producing a few cases of individual realization

It is a very hopeful sign that steps have been initiated by India and by all the six other governments of South Asia to establish happy international relations with each other through the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation. I am sure that this process, in tune with the aspirations of the people concerned and with current international trends, will progress steadily. We should all work hard to see that our long border with Pakistan, particularly, will be demarcated with rose and jasmine plants, and not with military works! We must have the conviction that, in this space age, when impossibles are becoming possibles, in physical science, and when a man-made Voyager is flying out to outer space beyond the solar system, international peace and understanding, as much as national integration, belong to the realm of

the possible and the practical in the science of human possibilities. And Vivekananda expounded India's perennial philosophy, the Vedānta, exactly as *the science of human possibilities*, just as physical science deals with the *science of external nature's possibilities*.

#### 10. Conclusion

The universal humanist vision and passion of the Vedic tradition finds expression in two famous verses, out of many, which have inspired humanity here for ages, which goes straight to the heart of humanity abroad today, and with which I conclude this acceptance speech:

*Sarve bhavantu sukhinah  
sa ve santu nirāmayāḥ  
Sarve bhadrāṇi paśyant  
mā kaścit duḥkhabhāḥ bhuvet—*

'May all people (everywhere) be happy, may all people be free from ailments (physical and mental); may all people experience what is good and auspicious, may none be a victim of sorrow and suffering.'

*Durjanah sajjano bhūyāt  
sajjanah śāntimāpnuyāt ;  
Śānto mucyeta bandhebhyo  
muktaścānyān vimocayet—*

'May the wicked people become good people; and may the good people attain peace; may the peaceful people be freed from all bondages, and may the freed ones help to free other people also.'

Many friends have conveyed to me their good wishes for this occasion; since it is difficult to reply individually to all of them, I take this opportunity to convey my love and namaskars to all of them.

My love and good wishes and thanks to all of you present here.

## 150th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA PRIME MINISTER'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS

*(at the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi)*

RAJIV GANDHI

TODAY we celebrate two important anniversaries, two anniversaries that represent to a great extent the rebirth of India—the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna and the Centenary of the Ramakrishna Order. Sri Ramakrishna was born during the subjugation of India by the British. In his life-span of fifty years, he lit the flame of India's renaissance. The Ramakrishna Order was founded at Baranagar in Calcutta in 1886, the year of his Mahasamadhi. It was a great national endeavour, combining inspiration and idealism with compassion and action in the form of religious service for the common man, *Daridra Nāiāyana Sevā*. The Ramakrishna Order used symbols of religious philosophy to draw a code of duty and related it to the immediate needs of the society. It taught a philosophy of Jnana, Bhakti, Yoga, and Karma—Knowledge, Devotion, Yoga and Work—which could be related to the social problems of education and health, women's uplift, relief in natural or man-made disasters. This was achieved by linking the Ramakrishna Math, the spiritual brotherhood of the monks, with the Ramakrishna Mission, the social service wing which admits lay followers as well. Swami Budhananda has said that the Math gave the Order spiritual stability; the Mission, humanitarian dynamism. The Ramakrishna schools and colleges are amongst the best and are spread to the distant corners of our country. I have myself visited one at Along in Arunachal Pradesh.

Panditji in his autobiography said that Vivekananda and others gave us a measure

of self-respect again and roused up our dormant pride in our past. The Ramakrishna Order roused the pride in our past and also recognized and combated the evils that we had inherited from the past, like the oppression of women, untouchability, discrimination based on caste and religion. Alas, in most of the communities, higher spiritual truths were not of prime importance. This distortion gave rise to bigotry and sectarianism. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa separated the spiritual essence from the social aspect. He practised and experienced the truth of all religions, he bequeathed the universal truth to all humanity. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'I have practised all religions: Hindu, Islam, Christianity, and have also followed the paths of different Hindu sects. I have found that it is the same God towards whom all are moving, though along different paths.' Such profound perceptions gave a sense of duty and common purpose to the struggle for Indian independence. Similar perceptions are needed today to build a modern India, perhaps even more important, to build a new order in the world. We should now project the teachings of Ramakrishna as a truth, as one truth, for all humanity. This is the only way to bring about a unity of the human race, this is the only way to ensure peace and progress on earth.

Sri Ramakrishna's teachings in the timeless tradition of Indian civilization have gone deep into our ethos, but in spite of that strength, today we see fanatic fundamentalism and fringe cultures coming up to the surface. They don't go down to



the heart or essence of religion but prefer to remain at the superficial and ritual level. It is this that we must face and counter today. Religion is much deeper than an assortment of superficial dogmas and rituals, as it is presented to be by many today. To meet the fundamentalist's challenge is not to deny religion, but to assert our secularism as defined by *Sarva-dharma-samabhāva*, an acceptance of all religions, an acceptance of a higher truth, shown to us by Sri Ramakrishna. It is time for us to counter the narrow-mindedness of some religious views by mobilizing our whole society to the deeper values of our civilization, the values that have grown from absorption and assimilation of all the religions that we have on our soil. Fundamentalism cannot be countered by another narrow fundamentalism. It can only be countered by a greater, broader perspective, by the pursuit of a higher truth.

The spiritual links that bind us to our heritage, to our traditions, must not be broken in the name of progress, prosperity and modernization. Our development, our stepping into the next century, will only be of value to us if that is done by maintaining our values, by maintaining all that is good in our heritage, by maintaining our culture. If we lose our spirituality the process of modernizing, we cannot call that progress and we cannot say we have developed into a better country. Our development must include the development of the spirit, the development of the inner core of our personality, if it is to be a total development. It is spirituality which has made our culture strong. It is this inner spirituality which has characterized all our traditions, religions, our whole civilization.

It has taught us to look beyond our self to selflessness, beyond fear to fearlessness, beyond knowledge to wisdom. If we are to build India into a great international power, if we are to banish poverty, if prosperity is to prevail and modern sciences are to flourish, it will be of no avail if we lose that spiritual thread which binds us to our roots, which runs continuously through our moments of greatness, through our moments of travail, through our moments of degradation.

Swami Vivekananda has said, 'Up India and conquer the world with your spirituality.' These words aroused the national consciousness during the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century; they are equally needed in the transition from the twentieth to the twenty-first century. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda distinguished themselves by thinking anew without losing the moorings of the past. Their freshness of thought imparted a new vigour to the legacy they had built upon. Such mental dynamism is needed to propel India into the twenty-first century just as it was needed to bring India into the twentieth century. So I thank and felicitate the Ramakrishna Order and the Ramakrishna Mission for the century of service that has been given to the nation and its people. You will blaze many a trail, show a true religion of compassion for all beings, respect for all religions, service to the deprived and the oppressed, meditation and action, purification of the self and of society, faithful to Swami Vivekananda's precept, 'Let man manifest the divinity that is within himself, and let him make the world reflect the spiritual oneness of the universe.'



## MEMOIRS OF FOREIGN TRIPS

SWAMI HIRANMAYANANDA

[Srimat Swami Hiranmayanandaji Maharaj, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, visited Singapore, Malaysia, and Japan in December 1986, and Moscow in February 1987. During his stay in those countries he visited various places of interest, addressed public meetings and had informal talks with academicians, individuals in public life and devotees. On his return to India, in an informal conversation with the representative of *Prabuddha Bharata*, Revered Swamiji recounted some of his experiences. We are glad to reproduce below excerpts from the conversation—Ed. P.B.]

**Representative:** Maharaj, recently you visited Singapore, Malaysia, Japan and Moscow. We are interested to know about some of your experiences in those countries as also the impact of Ramakrishna-Vive-ananda ideas there. Please tell us first about your experience at Singapore

**Maharaj:** I was invited from Singapore by Swami Shiveswarananda, the head of our local centre there (a branch of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission) to inaugurate the first phase of the celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna. He had arranged for my travel in Singapore Airlines. When I arrived at Singapore I was really surprised to see that country. It is a small country which was invaded twice, first by Japan and then by the British. After the war the whole country was a mass of ruins. But now I found the country had been rebuilt splendidly. Singapore is a beautiful country now. The roads were clean and tidy. They are very broad and their surface is so smooth that when our car moved at a very high speed we did not feel any jolt. All the houses looked like new houses. I did not see any slum. There may be a few inside the city. But they are making arrangements to remove all the slums. Government is taking speedy and effective steps. Singapore had no industries earlier. They depended on the import-export business. But now

they are fast building up industries and the country is very prosperous.

We had a branch of our Mission at Singapore even before the war. You know our late Swami Bhaswaranandaji. He was there during the war, and we had then two centres. At one place there was a hostel and the Ashrama at the other, where, Swami Bhaswaranandaji lived. At that time Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose used to visit the Ashrama regularly in the evenings. He would sit quietly in the temple shrine, and meditate there. But he used to come all alone without any escort. I was told that one day Netaji was in difficulty. The car while going back broke down. He was helpless. Then another car came, picked him up, and took him to his headquarters. Later on, they used to send somebody to escort him. Netaji was very much devoted to Sri Ramakrishna. It is said that he used to read the *Chandi* everyday. One day he lost his copy of the *Chandi*. So he sent word to the Swami if he could help him by sending a copy of the *Chandi*. The Swami had none except his own. He sent that copy to Netaji. After Singapore fell into the hands of the Britishers, they arrested the Swami and kept him in jail for one day. These are known to the people there. Today, however, Netaji is not much remembered, nor is there any statue for him. There are Indians including

Bengalis. Perhaps they will do something in the days to come.

As I said earlier, we had two centres there. Because we had difficulty of manpower, our first centre at Morris Road was sold away. There was another in Berkely street, and there we have the centre now. There is a temple, an office building, a Students' Home, and also a few other buildings. The Ashrama owns a car of its own. In the Ashrama they had arranged for my lecture during the celebrations. In Singapore there is some restriction imposed by government about giving lectures. Prior approval of the script by the government is necessary before one is allowed to speak. I gave the Ashrama the freedom to choose any subject and send necessary points. They used to give me the points and I used to speak on them. On the first day, I think, a retired justice of a high court took the chair. I was the chief guest and I talked on Sri Ramakrishna. There were, of course, the prayers and invocations etc. The hall could accommodate about 250 people. It was full. I talked extempore for nearly 45 minutes. I told them that there was nothing in my talk which was political or which would be any criticism of Singapore government. Rather I was very much impressed by Singapore. I discussed the impact of Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings on the modern world.

*Representative:* Maharaj, what is the future of the Ramakrishna movement at Singapore in your opinion?

*Maharaj:* I think we have not done much yet for the Singapore people as such. Although we have been working there for such a long time, few among the Chinese population who form the largest majority, are visiting us. On the first day I found two Chinese people in the audience. Others were mostly Tamilians and Bengalis. Perhaps the whole community in Singapore

will be drawn to our Vedantic religion in the days to come. But we must take interest in all sections of the Singapore public.

*Representative:* Maharaj, other than our Ashrama at Singapore, what other places did you visit?

*Maharaj:* I happened to visit one of the hospitals in Singapore. I could not see the whole of it, because I went at night. I could see only the orthopaedic department, the head of which was well known to me. It was clean. I wanted to see the operation theatre. The doctor said: 'Let me enquire if it is possible'. He consulted the nurse-in-charge and we were allowed to go only after putting on the theatre dress. Even the head and professor of orthopaedics had to obey the nurse-in-charge. They are so disciplined. I found that the operation theatre was well-equipped with the most modern instruments. I was very much impressed as I had the previous experience of running 3 hospitals of our organization.

Once I went to see a bird's sanctuary. We saw various types of birds like parrots, flamingoes and others. They have made a beautiful arrangement for entertaining visitors to Singapore. Some bird-trainers were there. It was morning. One bird-trainer came and called a bird's name. 2 or 3 minutes later a bird came flying, sat on the shoulders of that man, and took some food from his hand, kissed the man, and then flew away. Most wonderful of all was that it was a day time; the trainer called three owls. They too came and sat on his shoulders and took food. Many of the visitors were surprised. Thus they have made it a place where Singapore draws visitors and earns money.

On one occasion we travelled by a monorail. But this monorail is unlike that of Japan. It was running on one rail placed on the ground. The journey was

quite comfortable and people enjoy a ride by monorail. We also had a short journey by steamer.

*Representative:* Maharaj, what was the occasion of your visit to Malaysia?

*Maharaj:* It was the Singapore Ashrama which had arranged for my visit to Malaysia. After the second day of the celebration I went to Malaysia, where I visited Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Seremban. First I went to Penang. At Penang there is an Ashrama run by the local devotees. According to the constitution of that Ashrama, they have a President, a Vice-President, and an Assistant President. The Vice-President, one Mr. Pillai is a rich man. My accommodation had been arranged in his house. They took me to the Ashrama there. It was a private Ashrama (not affiliated to Ramakrishna Math and Mission). On one side of the Ashrama they have a hostel for the girls and a hostel for the boys on the other. There were teachers to look after them—male teachers for the boys and female for the girls. They have a school and a little open hall for Kalyanam (marriage ceremonies for the public). And through that they collect a fund every year. When they raised the question of affiliation of this Ashrama to our Mission, I told them that we could not affiliate this sort of Ashrama with a women's institution. If it is to be done by us, it has to be done in a different way. That means the boys' institution would be a separate one from the girls'. They said: 'We don't want anything. Just send us one Swami'. Then I explained that the atmosphere for sending a Swami was not there as there is no room for Kalyanam in our affiliated institutions. Even then they kept on requesting: 'Please send us a Swami.'

After a short while the chief minister of Penang came. He was informed of our arrival by somebody there. He was a nice man and could talk English fluently.

He said that he had known Swami Bhaswaranandaji in Singapore, and that he was very friendly with him. Later, he even came to see the Swami at Benaras, but unfortunately, by then the Swami had passed away. He also said that he had visited our Hollywood centre in the United States. Then he talked on Sri Ramakrishna. In his talk he appreciated the various activities of our organization and expressed regard for Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. My host also talked for a long time. I could not follow him because he was talking only in Malaysian language. And then after my talk we left that place. Next day we reached Kuala Lumpur.

*Representative:* So you stayed in Penang just for a day?

*Maharaj:* Yes, for a day only. Next morning we left Penang and reached Kuala Lumpur. They have an Ashrama at Kuala Lumpur which is open to everybody, like any other small Ashrama. It was clean. They have one room for the visiting monks to stay. But we did not stay in this Ashrama. Our accommodation had been arranged elsewhere by a devotee, Mrs. Uma Shanmugam. Then from there we left for Seremban in the afternoon.

At Seremban we stayed in the house of our devotee Mr. Ramachandran and Kasturi Ramachandran. There was a local Ashrama. We visited that also. From there we started in the afternoon by car for Singapore. The journey was nearly for six hours through deep forests and beautiful places on the hillside where we saw canyon like areas.

On the next day I was to talk on the 'Early Indian civilization' at the Singapore Ashrama. In the course of the talk I dwelt on the Egyptian civilization, the Roman, and Greek civilizations, and why all these civilizations died while the Indian civilization has been very much alive. Next day they had a whole-day spiritual retreat

in the Ashrama. I had to talk twice, once on Swamiji and once on Holy Mother. The small hall was over-crowded. About 300 people had come. Most of the retreat participants were Indians. I expected people from various communities to participate in such sessions. Probably in future our Ashrama will have larger number of devotees from all sections of Singapore. On the whole the Ashrama celebrations were quite successful.

*Representative:* Maharaj, what was your next trip?

*Maharaj:* From Singapore I left for Japan. I flew by the same Singapore Airlines. At the airport I was received by Swami Siddharthananda, the head of our Japan centre, and one Mr. Rao and his wife. They escorted me to our Ashrama there. Ours is a small Ashrama in the suburb of Tokyo with a cottage-type building. They have a shrine where the Japanese devotees come and meditate everyday. They keep everything clean. The Swami used to occupy one room which was given to me. There was another room in front of it to which the Swami moved during my stay. Arrangements for board and lodging were quite good. The Ashrama is functioning well. But for better functioning we want to introduce a new constitution.

We have about 50 initiated devotees in Japan. But half of them cannot keep regular contact with Ashrama as they live far away. Some 15-20 devotees regularly come to our Ashrama. They are under the guidance of Siddharthananda. If the Ashrama were in the city proper instead in suburb area perhaps there would have been many more devotees. I told Siddharthananda that some day he has to sell away this Ashrama in the suburb and move to the city proper. But in Tokyo city everything is very costly, land, buildings etc. Naturally it is very difficult for us at

this moment to do it. So he has to continue for sometime more in that place.

About half a mile away from our Ashrama there lives a Japanese lady-devotee who knows English. She has already translated some of our books from English to Japanese, and they publish a journal also. I think it is a monthly journal. This devotee is 79-year old. Every morning she used to come and help us in many ways.

There are some Japanese young men who are devoted to the Ashrama. But they hardly talk English. They converse with Siddharthananda in Japanese. That much Japanese he knows. He has to memorize some 2,500 words in order to learn the language. By now, after staying there for two years, he has memorized only 250 words. Thus he can somehow carry on the talk amongst a small group of devotees. One of the ardent boy devotees took leave from his office and stayed all these days at the Ashrama, because he had to prepare food for me. He could prepare Indian dishes like *Puri* and *curries*. The Japanese take rice and raw fish with some thing like sauce. They eat with chopstick. The Japanese devotees impressed me very much. They are indeed nice people. There was another strange boy devotee. He works in an office. One day when we went to the sea shore there he was waiting for us. I could not talk to him, he could not talk to me either; yet he came and waited there. Another day when we went to see some parts of the city, there again he was present.

I noticed that Japanese have a different mode of salutation. They bend at the waist and nod their head thrice. But our Japanese devotees, however, used to kneel down and touch the feet in the Indian fashion. They used to take me out to see many things around. One evening Siddharthananda came and said: 'Our

college boys and girls want to accompany you during your walk.' I said: 'What good will it do? I cannot talk to them.' Then he said: 'No. They are very much looking forward to it. You must go.' Then I had to go.

However, I could not go out much as my stay was short. I didn't visit Tokyo even. But I could see from distance the huge buildings of Tokyo. I went by car only thrice in order to see certain places. Our visit to Yokohama was very interesting. You know Swamiji visited Yokohama and wrote a beautiful letter from there to his Madras disciples. I wonder how he managed, because Swamiji did not know Japanese. He knew English and the Japanese usually do not learn any other language. On the day I went to Yokohama, they told me: 'Now we shall take you by monorail'. So we went to a station and when the train came we got into it. It was not touching the ground at all. It was hanging on an overhead wire and going over the houses and the residential areas. In the city there were multi-storeyed buildings but less so in the suburbs. There they have smaller buildings, cottage-type, mostly made of wood and paper. I liked these smaller cottages. So the journey in the monorail was a nice experience. It runs at a very high speed. I heard that it runs nearly 500 miles per hour. After a few stations we got down at a place where our car was waiting.

Once I was taken to a place where the famous image of Japanese Buddha was there. It was nearly 49 ft. high. They said there used to be a temple over the image, but it was washed away by a tidal bore.

*Representative:* Maharaj, did you meet any Zen Buddhist? We read that Zen is very popular there.

*Maharaj:* Yes. I asked one Zen Buddhist about their meditation. He said: 'I

meditate on nothingness.' I said, 'What do you mean by meditating on nothingness? How can you meditate on nothingness?' He said: 'No, I try to meditate on nothingness. I try to feel there is nothing.' This kind of meditation has some following there. But it seemed to me that religion is not their primary concern. The most striking aspect of the Japanese life is that they are very industrious. They don't waste any time. They have neither much time for religion. You know how the Japanese industry is leading the world market today.

*Representative:* Maharaj, kindly tell us something about your recent visit to Moscow.

*Maharaj:* Recently in Soviet Union there was an 'International Forum for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World for the Survival of Humanity' sponsored by the Soviet Government. The entire Forum was held in various sections, one for the Religious leaders, another for scientists, and another for famous artists and writers. I was invited to speak in the Religious Section of this International Forum. It was the first Secretary of the Moscow Writers' Union who, through Soviet Government, impressed upon me the need of my presence there as the representative of Indian religions, especially of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement. The Religious Section of the Forum led by the Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church of Moscow, sent a 4-page telegram requesting me to attend the Forum. I was not keeping well. I thought it would be difficult for me to stay at Moscow where temperature comes down very low, even to—12°. I was hesitating. But they phoned again in order to have me at Moscow. Finally I had to yield. On going there I found many distinguished personalities from different fields of science, literature and religion, from all over the world. There were nearly 1000 participants. From India,

artists like Mrinal Sen and writers like Amrita Pritam were also there. I spoke at the inaugural session of the Religious Section.

We were given the best hospitality by the Soviet Government. We were placed in an excellent hotel in Moscow. There was an open courtyard in that big hotel. The roof of the courtyard was covered with glass and it was internally heated. There were raised platforms where we could sit down and talk with friends. It was a beautiful setting. There was one 3-storeyed tall column. On the four sides of the column there were clocks, but on the top of it there was a metallic cock. During breakfast, dinner, lunch and tea time we could see this cock spreading its metallic wings, stretch its long neck as the cocks do. Swami Lokeshwarananda had asked me to take some dry fruits with me, in case I need them. But we could get rice and all sorts of vegetables nicely cooked. As I said, it was a huge hotel and all the religious leaders were placed there I could see the Christian Fathers wearing black dress with golden cross or a pearl cross or even a diamond cross. They were invited to the conference from all over the world. The Archbishop of Delhi was also there.

*Representative:* Maharaj, is it not strange that even some 30 years ago the Soviet Union was against religious leaders, and today the same Soviet Union is inviting them from all over the world?

*Maharaj:* This is because, I think, today's Russia needs the moral force of religion. Russian way of life, in spite of the iron curtain, is today beset with problems. Obviously, the government wants to find some solution. Probably this is one of the reasons why Russia is trying to liberalize things today. Perhaps some moral lessons may help solve their problems. That is why in an International Forum they gave importance to Religious Section also.

Gorbachev had invited one hundred and thirty five religious leaders from all over the world and all these people were taken very good care of.

*Representative:* Maharaj, what is the general attitude of Moscow people or Russian people towards Indians and Indian culture?

*Maharaj:* I think all of them recognize India as their friend. Soviet people today are very friendly to India and the Indian people. Some of the Soviet intellectuals who had come here earlier came to know that I had gone from the Ramakrishna Order. They came to see me. Of course, Dr. Kuznetsov, first secretary, Moscow Organ of the Writers' Union, himself used to come and talk to me for hours. We were making fun. I said: 'You are at the root of my coming to Russia.' He said: 'Yes'. He is about 52-54. He is also a member of the upper house of the Supreme Soviet. In fact he is a very important man. When I was due to come back to India he said: 'You have to come here again. I shall write to you. But I cannot keep you in a hotel like this. It is very costly.' I said, 'Any modest hotel will do for me.' Then he said: 'You have to be here for a fortnight. I will take you to Tashkent, Siberia and many other important places.' He is a very generous person.

This gentleman had come here earlier in mid-January of this year. He had come to participate in the two seminars organized by the Institute of Culture at Calcutta. One was on Peace and the other on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. Along with him thirteen other distinguished Soviet academicians also participated in those two seminars. I happened to preside over one of the seminars. Swami Lokeshwarananda, the Secretary of the Institute, introduced me in his welcome address. I took the chair. Dr. Kuznetsov

and the President of Soviet Academy of Sciences also sat along with me. They earlier knew Swami Lokeshwarananda when he had been to Russia.

Swami Lokeshwarananda asked me when they could go to Belur Math. I invited them to visit Belur Math on the next day at 100' clock, and to have lunch with us. They gladly agreed. They came, went round the Math, met the senior swamis and had lunch with us. They felt very happy in this serene atmosphere.

*Representative:* Maharaj, what is the future of the Vedantic thoughts in your opinion in Russia in the days to come?

*Maharaj:* You see, it is very difficult to say anything. Till the time of Gorbachev, life was a bit different there. Russia was virtually closed for the outsiders. It was difficult for us to go there. Swami Dayananda went to Russia and Swami Nityaswarupananda also went there. Then, Swami Ranganathananda went there at the invitation from the Indian ambassador there. He talked on Swamiji at the Moscow university. But when Swami Lokeshwarananda went, people somehow came to know him personally. During his first visit, his stay there was just a stopover on his way from Bulgaria to India. Next time when he was invited by the Soviet Writers' Union for the centenary of Rabindranath Tagore, many academicians and scholars talked to him and came to know more of Sri Ramakrishna. Shri Nemai Sadhan Basu, Vice-chancellor of Viswa Bharati, also went. They all gave me an impression that people there very much liked to hear about India and Indian thoughts, and that the Russian academicians were making an intensive study of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature. In Soviet Union academicians are the most highly respected persons.

*Representative:* Maharaj, what is the reason that they are now studying Sri

Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda?

*Maharaj:* I don't know exactly. None of us ever tried to know either. It seems they were first attracted by some writings of Tolstoy on Swamiji. These were mostly preserved in his diary and other places. Tolstoy's complimentary reference to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda might have drawn them to these great masters, and especially Swamiji. They started reading Swamiji. And you know if one reads Swamiji, initially one will be ewept off his feet. That is what has started happening now. Not that they have accepted all of Swamiji. But they are getting increasingly attracted to Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji. The influence is growing so deep that when the Russian academicians spoke here on the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna at the Cultural Institute, one of them talked about Swamiji and on Sri Ramakrishna and then said: 'I am very much attracted to Holy Mother and to Lātu Maharaj.'

*Representative:* That is something incredible, a top Russian academician being drawn to the life and teachings of Holy Mother, and Swami Adbhutananda, the shepherd-saint among the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

*Maharaj:* Then he said he would visit Jayarambati, the birthplace of Holy Mother. Next morning he went alone to Jayarambati, visited Mother's temple and came back. Unfortunately, I could not meet him there when I was in Moscow this time. I tried to contact him but could not succeed. I inquired about another aged Russian lady in Moscow. They said she had been sent to Pakistan on some assignment. Earlier when she had come to India along with the other Russian academicians she too visited Belur Math. When others were taken for lunch, she stayed back and said: 'I want to offer a flower to Sri Ramakrishna.' The main temple was closed then. So I



said: 'You can go to the old temple and offer flower there.' She went up and offered flower in the old shrine of our Math. She very much liked to visit Kamarpukur and Jayarambati. But being an interpreter she was very busy in meetings and she could not go. She had told me: 'If you come to Russia, I will be glad to meet you there.'

The other day Swami Lokeswarananda was telling me if there should be any future religion in Russia, that would be the religion of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. Soviet people know our interests are purely spiritual and that we have no political programmes. So they are attracted more and more to the ideas of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. They are opening themselves to something spiritual or higher aspects of life. They have already translated Romain Rolland's books on Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji. Recently, a book has been published where Soviet writers wrote in depth on Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. It was published by Swami Lokeswarananda from our Institute of culture. I have written a foreword to this book. These are essays on Swamiji written by the Russian academicians. Most of them are translated from Russian into English. Many Russians are studying this book. One may not agree with all that is written. But all the articles are very incisive. They have given quotations from the books they have studied. They are continuing and intensifying these studies on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Kuznetsov told me they would publish two volumes of

Vivekananda's works. When they came to Belur Math I made a present of many books, including Swamiji's Complete Works and the Cultural Heritage of India. They are now showing genuine interest in the life and teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

When I was in Moscow a very interesting thing happened. One Russian gentleman and his wife, whom I earlier knew when they had visited India, wanted to meet me. So I went and was sitting with them in their courtyard. The wife could understand English, but could not speak. The gentleman was talking. He was asking me about how to control the mind. He said: 'We are controlling external nature but how to control the mind?' Then I discussed Yoga and other related topics. Instantly he got up, went inside, and brought one small album of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji. It was a black and white album. Swami Gitananda, who was with me, brought out one coloured new album which he had brought from India. He wanted to present it to them. The gentleman said: 'Please wait'. He went out, washed his hands, and came. Then he stretched out his hands and asked me to put the coloured album into his hands. So you see this is what is happening. After all, man is man. As I always say, man is incurably religious. Sometimes I quote Francis Thomson's 'The Hound of Heaven'. God, the Hound of Heaven, is always chasing us. I realized that the Soviet people would be attracted to Ramakrishna and Vivekananda more and more in the days to come.



# RELIGIOUS RESOURCES FOR PEACE

SWAMI SIDDHINATHANANDA

This is the international year of peace, proclaimed by the United Nations. Evidently there is a lot of peacelessness around the globe. Peace by derivation means freedom from war. The U.N.O. being primarily a peace-keeping body in a warring world, has to declare war on war. Due to its efforts, an uneasy peace prevails at present in most parts of the world, though there are a few hot spots. It is mutual fear that disturbs the peace. It is a truce born of the fear of retribution.

Nearer home we have our own problems. There are various forces working to disturb the peace of mind of every thinking individual. Political, economic, religious and social forces contribute their own share to break the truce. Common man experiences constant stress and strain which robs him of even the peace of a sound sleep. War of peace has to be fought on all fronts. We have to make our own contribution. At present I am required to suggest the Hindu religious resources for the cause of peace. Peace has no religious label. It is universal. Problems are personal for each and so each has to find his own solution. In this process each man's religion can be of great help.

Super powers keep peace through deterrent threats. Smaller nations suffer peace through mutual fear. In the national field there are the political parties who swear by peace and do their worst to shatter it. Politics is the game of power. It is fought with money-power and organized coercion. They thrive on strife. Success at the hustings is their sole aim. It depends on money and organization. It requires huge amounts. Through normal and legal channels it is impossible to collect such vast amounts. They resort to smugglers and black-marketeers. Extortion and

intimidation are their *modus operandi* to raise funds.

How can those who capture power with the backing of black money hope to close the dens of vices? Funds of political parties smell liquor and vice. How can those who come to power through organized gangsterism keep peace in the land? Strife is the very life of the politician. Election is the biggest breeder of corruption. No, politics cannot and will not foster peace; on the contrary, it is the overflow of politics to the educational, social, domestic and other fields that create all the disturbances. Physical power which is the politicians' goal cannot deliver the goods. Economic power too cannot do it as is evident from the experience of the people of rich countries.

Why do they fail? For, their approach is from the wrong end. They start to reform the society before reforming themselves. The religious man approaches the problem from the other end. He takes to heart the advice, 'physician, heal thyself.' Especially so with Hinduism which is not an organized religion. The primary unit is the individual. Peace and war are ultimately the creations of man. So the start must be made from that end.

The religious man's quest begins with man. Religion views man as spirit caught in a body. He is essentially a spirit. The spirit is the same in all beings. As such all are brothers in and through the spirit. Then our approach to our neighbour will be brotherly, for my neighbour and I are the children of the same father. Love is the language of the spirit. And it is the want of it that kills peace.

The spirit is ever blissful. But the tragedy is that man has forgotten his true

being. That is the original sin. When the spirit is forgotten, the animal in man rules the roost. Unlike the other animals, man has a very specialized tool called the intellect. Animals fight for food or mate. Once these are procured, they are satisfied and are at peace. Not so man. He lives more on the past and the future than in the present. And that renders him ever excited. The mind backed by intellect is in league with the senses to protect the human animal. But his greed forces him to fight his fellow creatures. His will to power constrains him to beat down his rivals. Lust of self and power drives man mad. Unbridled pursuit of pleasure and power is at the root of the loss of peace.

What is the remedy? Restrain them. How? Teach them. The boy at five years of age is taken to the house of the teacher. There he is in company with the boys of his own age group. He is taught personal hygiene, code of conduct, worship of God and devotional practices, besides courses in the Vedas and the various auxiliaries such as grammar, prosody etc. He has to spend at least twelve years in the study of the basic virtues and the wisdom contained in the Vedas. The rigorous life at the feet of the preceptor gives him a firm grounding in the ideals to be pursued, the duties to be performed, the debts to be discharged in order to make life smooth, rich, useful, and fruitful.

On the eve of his return home after graduation, the teacher tells him: *satyam vada dharman cara*, 'Speak the truth and do what is right'. Then follows a few hints as to what is right and how to decide what is right when in doubt. This exhortation contains the surest guidelines for a contented, and peaceful life.

Returning home, he takes up the domestic responsibilities, earns money in lawful ways, enjoys legitimate pleasures, discharges his debts to the gods, sages and

others, performs his duties to the society and the country, and thus leads a healthy and worthy life. Man has innumerable debts. Nothing in life is our own except perhaps our ego; that too, on deeper thought, will be found to be a gift of God. We are duty-bound to discharge these debts as far as possible. If duties are duly done, occasions of conflict will be nil. The very doing of duty will provide all our needs and there will be no need to fight for our rights. Our right is to do the duty.

When the son is back home after study, hand over all the responsibilities and liabilities to him and gracefully withdraw to a quiet corner at some sacred place. So long you have been giving the devil his due; henceforth, give your Soul what is overdue. This will avoid the problems of generation gap. This was the arrangement in ancient India and is called *vauaprastha ashrama*. The problems the old face in the advanced countries will make us aware how wise and necessary such an arrangement is. We are short term tenants in this body. Messengers of time will serve us notice without fail. Ailments, wrinkles and grey hair are reminders that our time is running short. We have to prepare for the final pilgrimage. The lighter the load, the easier the journey. Retire in time. Henceforth one is to devote oneself solely to spiritual practices such as meditation, scriptural study, etc. Long and deep meditation on the meaning of life will convince one that the whole thing is a play of the Divine. It is all spirit within and spirit without. The soul alone is. No more conflict, no more vexation. Then one is at peace with oneself and with one and all, and that is the peace that passeth all understanding.

The question may be asked: It may be all right for a fortunate few to attain peace in this manner; but what about the common man? The answer is: the path is open

to all. Try as much as possible and to the extent you try, you will enjoy peace. The more the number of such persons in a society the more peaceful will the society be. They are the salts of the earth. Just think of a world devoid of Buddha or Kṛṣṇa or Christ. How horrible it would be!

Positive peace is a spiritual quality, and that can be realized only by realizing man's spiritual dimension. Peace is usually defined negatively as absence of strife. That is because man is looked upon not as spirit but as flesh. It is the law of the flesh to feed on flesh, and the peace that can be expected at that level is only a respite from strife. Man must be taught his real nature and the animal in him must be held in leash. Only religion can do this. But the forces ranged against his learning this are many and well-organized. Modern science has reduced man to a talking monkey. Economics have made him a mindless machine made to mint money. The politician has made him a pawn in his power game. The net result: worry, hurry, corruption, madness and hell. What is the remedy they offer? Pills, pricks, liquor, hashish, LSD and what not? That is the gateway to hell.

We have had nearly forty years of secularism. Secularism has no use for God. Its gods are self, power and pleasure. And where do we stand? Corruption to the core and from the core. Indiscipline everywhere: in services, schools, colleges and even at home. Teachers are afraid of their wards. Many parents curse their fate. Politician has no religion, but he exploits religion to feather his own nest. To add insult to injury, he puts all the blame on religion. No, it is the politician playing his game with the religious senti-

ment of the common man that is at the root of most of the society's ills. Some who take to religion not out of any vocation but as a career also play into the hands of the politician. Politics thrives on discontent. Peace spells its doom. No, it cannot bring peace to man.

So, we have to come to the grim conclusion that the search for peace in a divided world is a never-ending process. Man's greed has no end. As long as he is not able to keep it within limits, confrontations are inevitable. Is the search then futile? No, it teaches the seeker wisdom. He learns he was on the wrong track. The prodigal can never be at peace until he retraces his steps. Struggle and strife are the law of the brute. Love and cooperation are the law on the human level.

Love is a divine quality. Love thy neighbour as thyself. Why? For thou and thy neighbour are one. Love God for His own sake and thy neighbour in and through God. That is the only way to peace. All other struggles are meant to make us aware of the futility of looking for peace in a transient and miserable world. It is a vanity of vanities, all a vanity. When we learn that, we turn Godward. The religious resources for peace are the realization of God and the means of attaining Him. God is within us. Love Him with all thy soul and thy neighbour in and through Him. Seek and ye will find. That is peace eternal.

The Vedic Ṛṣi declared: *tam ātmastham ye anupaśyanti dhīrāḥ, teṣāṃ śāntiḥ śāśvati netaṛeṣāṃ* 'Those wise ones who realize the soul within alone attain to peace eternal and none else.' Seek, knock and wait, and ye shall find.

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

### *Seminar on Sri Ramakrishna at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture*

'On 19, 20, and 21 January 1987 a three-day Seminar on 'Sri Ramakrishna and His Universal Message' was held at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture. This was a part of the 150th Birth Anniversary celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna held at the Institute. The speakers at the seminar were Russian and Indian scholars of eminence. The subject-matter for the first day was 'Global Aspects of the Ramakrishna Movement'; on the second day, it was 'Religion as interpreted by Sri Ramakrishna'. The concluding session was on 'Message of Sri Ramakrishna to the Modern World'.

The seminar began with an opening song by Swami Balabhadrananda. The song was an invocation to Sri Ramakrishna, the Supreme Incarnation of God born to lead humanity towards godliness. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Secretary of the Institute, gave the welcome address and said that this seminar where Russian and Indian scholars were going to speak for the first time from the same platform, was a significant event and a powerful stride in the growth of spiritual solidarity of the world. Swami Hiranmayananda, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, who presided over the opening session said that the unique feature of the Ramakrishna movement was that here one could attain self realization by progressing from dualistic worship of gods and goddesses, to qualified monism, and then finally to monism, the realization of the undying divinity dwelling within and enveloping the world without.

Swami Atmasthananda, Assistant Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, who presided over the second session

spoke about the love of Sri Ramakrishna and how the world today revolves round this all-engulfing love which unites humanity irrespective of caste, creed, and religion.

Prof. Amallesh Tripathi who presided over the concluding session spoke about the harmony between the truths mentioned in our scriptures and the various spiritual realizations in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. The speakers from Russia were Dr. F. Kuznetsov, Dr. Rybakov, Prof. Kariakin, Dr. Adamovich, Mira Salganik, Prof. Mokulsky, Dr. Sergei Seribriani. The Indian speakers were Dr. Panduranga Rao, Dr. Rabindra Kumar Das Gupta, Dr. Raja Ramanna, Mr. Amiya Kumar Mazumdar, Prof. Hosseinur Rahman, Dr. Arindam Chakravarty, and Dr. Govinda Gopal Mukherjee.

What impressed the audience was that these Russian scholars who belonged to the Academy of Sciences and the Moscow Union of Writers, the two prominent institutions in Russia, were not just deep scholars but great admirers of Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings. The Russian scholars' speech indicated two broad reasons for their admiration, and perhaps adoration of Sri Ramakrishna. One was the historical background of Russia. Through struggles Russia became free from foreign rulers in the middle ages, and then again in this century Russian Revolution gave their countrymen freedom from tyranny and exploitation of a failing Czarism. Great men were leaders on both the occasions. The emphasis was on the right kind of leader, and the Russian scholars interpreted Sri Ramakrishna as the Divine Leader who brought revolution in our understanding of human life, its meaning and final goal. The other reason given by the Russian scholars was the experience of horrors and

atrocities of the second world war. This made them think what man can make of man. The death of millions brought about by a devastating war, filled them with a dissatisfaction with a purely material civilization. Russian thinkers today are in quest of peace and human understanding. Swamiji's centenary celebrations gave them an opportunity to know of Sri Ramakrishna's life as the beacon light to humanity.

Over the years many Russians in different walks of life who are reading, thinking and pondering on modern life, are finding that completeness of human life lies not only in physical, economic or material but also in spiritual fulfilment. They found that the essence of the Ramakrishna Movement lay in its constant endeavour to help man manifest their higher spiritual nature and realize the oneness of humanity. The Indian scholars emphasized that the Cosmic Self binds the entire humanity like a thread on a string of pearls, and this is also the message of Sri Ramakrishna.

It was indeed remarkable to hear the Russian scholars say that Sri Ramakrishna, for the first time in the history of mankind, found by his own historic spiritual experiences that all religions lead to the same goal. This idea is expressed in the well-known saying of Sri Ramakrishna 'As many faiths so many paths'. Indian scholars spoke about this unity of religions which was based on Sri Ramakrishna's experience. All scholars finally ended on the theme that Religion is one, while religions are many.

At the concluding session all the scholars dwelt on the theme that Sri

Ramakrishna's message of unity of mankind is based on his experience of the presence of One Divine Reality in everyone. For the Indians, it was quite an experience to hear the Russian scholars speak not only about Sri Ramakrishna but also about the Holy Mother as the Divine consort of Sri Ramakrishna, the ideal of purity and womanhood, and a combination of the old and the new world. Through the speeches of the various speakers it was evident that Sri Ramakrishna's message is slowly ushering in a new age of spirituality with the widest breadth, the highest catholicity, and the deepest intensity. The speakers concluded on the note, as Swamiji said, that the history of the world is the history of a few men who have faith in themselves. That faith calls out the divinity within us. Sri Ramakrishna is the universal Soul, Holy Mother is the universal Mother and Swamiji is the universal Teacher who asked us to believe first in ourselves, and then to strive sufficiently to manifest the infinite power immanent in us.

Sri A. N. Ray, ex-chief justice of India, while giving vote of thanks at the concluding session, said that the Holy Mother had heard from Sri Ramakrishna that people from other parts of the world would one day come to India. This seminar is a fulfilment of that vision. Nearly a century ago Swamiji went abroad to interpret the universal message of India to the western world. Today world's great scholars are coming to India to pay their respects to Sri Ramakrishna. The world indeed gets united today by Sri Ramakrishna's all-engulfing Love for humanity.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

### BENGALI

**DHARMA O AJKER JIJNASHA:** By SWAMI SOMESWARANANDA. Published by Dey's publishers, 36/5 Beniatola Lane, Calcutta 700 009. 1986. p. 175. Rs. 18.

Here is a widely-read and widely-travelled young Swami of the Ramakrishna Order, meeting and answering hundreds of questions from sceptics, radical revolutionaries, trade-union leaders, writers, hedonists, scientists, scholars, fundamentalists, advocates of permissive societies, depressed mothers, frustrated fathers, bewildered socialists, and misguided or ill-guided students of colleges and universities. Sympathetic answers, sometime like sharp repartees, come out like tongues of fire in very cordial and common accents of day-to-day life. Each answer strikes the reader with a force, a deep conviction, and a deeper understanding behind the words. With each answer a particular facet of the thousand-faceted jewel, the Vedanta, shines when the searchlight of interrogation is thrown on it. Vivekananda dreamt of a day when his followers would live and interpret Vedanta so that even a child could grasp it. This small volume is a daring attempt to fulfil that dream. The questioners here are not children, but intellectuals holding high university degrees. But many of them are child-like seekers, bewildered about the basic questions of a happy and decent living in the midst of an increasingly politicized, materialistic, and permissive society.

The Swami's answers are born of a deep feeling for the sufferings of modern man, especially of the modern youth with whom he has been working for more than two decades. Here is for instance, a catechism:

Q: Swami, what if I can feel happy without any moral values in life?

A: Do you really mean to be happy in this

way? I do not think you really mean it. Would you feel happy to see your own brothers or sisters living abjectly immoral life? Would you feel happy if your parents separate (for God's sake let it be far from it) on flimsy grounds and marry once again? If not, neither can you feel happy in a life without moral values.

Probably too blunt and direct, but such answers do penetrate at once into the walls of arrogant and biased minds. Once again,

Q: We are non-conformists. Why should we accept your Vedanta?

A: No, you are not non-conformists. You conform to some or other thinkers like Berkeley, Hume, Marx, Descartes etc. Ramakrishna, Christ, Buddha, Vivekananda—they were true non-conformists. They stood on the foundation of their own spiritual experiences rejecting all prevalent dogmas. Religion is realization, said Swamiji. Only a truly spiritual man is a non-conformist. He develops true independence—social, intellectual, economic or spiritual.

The book, as radical in its answers as the questions, is divided into four major sections: 1. Religion for today's life 2. Religion for the anti-religionists 3. Religion for personal day-to-day life. 4 Religion for young revolutionaries. From the beginning to end the inquisitive reader, as he turns the pages, will find his own knots and tangles getting slowly untied one after the other. The language is very modern, though backed by a wide range of knowledge from sciences, politics, Marxism, materialism, agnosticism, psychology, all culminating in the acceptance of Vedanta as interpreted by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda as the panacea for the psycho-social problems of modern man.

Unfortunately the book is in Bengali. A good English translation would certainly come to immediate benefit of a wider public.

S.J.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### CELEBRATIONS OF THE 150th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE CENTENARY OF THE RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, BELUR MATH

The 150th Birth Anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Dev and the centenary of the

Ramakrishna Sangha was celebrated in a befitting manner at the Ramakrishna Math, Belur.

On the evening of 24 December 1886 a few young disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, inspired with the burning zeal of God realization, kept vigil around a fire (*dhuni*) at Antpur, a quiet village of Bengal. Their Master had passed away only a few months before. Sitting round

the fire in the deepening gloom of the winter night they felt the passion of the apostles of Christ who laid down their lives one by one to preach their Master's message and to build His church. The acts of the apostles became living. These young men felt a resurrection of the same passion in their veins. They vowed not to return home and lay down their lives like those apostles for the God who gave them all His love and responsibility of a global mission. When the night dawned they came to know that it was the Holy Christmas night.

Exactly after a century on the evening of 24 December 1986 two hundred monks of the Ramakrishna Order assembled at the same spot and reenacted the same occasion with their reverence and remembrance of the great apostles of Sri Ramakrishna. Srimat Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, led the ceremony. Monks of the Math spent the holy night there round the fire which they lit again on the historic spot after a century.

The long centenary programme conducted at the Math included *virajahoma* for the monks and *japavarna* by the monks and brahmacharins of the order. The 8-day long celebration began on 1 March 1987 under a huge pandal at the Math. Senior monks of the Order like Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Swami Hiranmayanandaji, Atmasthanandaji and others spoke on various days.

Devotional songs by well-known artists were organized. The songs of Sri Sambhu Mukherji, the 3-day Jatra performance by the Sibpur dramatic organization, the Kalikirtan by Andul Kalikirtan Samiti and other programmes created a vibrant atmosphere of devotion in the Math. A special feature of the celebration was a huge colourful procession on 4 March. Nearly 7,000 persons including monks, devotees, teachers, students and the general public participated in the procession. It started from Dakshineswar Kali temple and ended at Sri Ramakrishna Math, Belur.

*CELEBRATIONS at other centres of the Math and Mission.*

*Ramakrishna Math, Bhubaneswar:* The celebrations, which were organized from 26 December 1986 to 14 February 1987 included a spiritual retreat for devotees, a drama by school students, a debate competition, a

number of public meetings where eminent speakers like Sri J. B. Patnaik, chief minister, Orissa, Sri Niranjan Patnaik, minister of industries, Sri Prasanna Kumar Das, speaker, legislative assembly, Sri Gangadhar Mohapatra, ex-minister, Swamis Rudratmanandaji, Bhagavanandaji, Dincshanandaji and others spoke on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.

A special seminar in two sessions was organized on the topic 'Sri Ramakrishna and the present age'. Writers, educationists and thinkers of Orissa, like prof. Tattwakandar Misra, prof. Diwakar Tripathy and many others discussed the relevance of Sri Ramakrishna in the background of modern Indian literature.

The most important phase of the celebration was an extensive lecture trip to Orissa by Srimat Swami Vandananandaji Maharaj, a senior Trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. The Swami was received as the State guest of Orissa, and he spoke in many places on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna which included Jagatsinghpur and Cuttack city of Cuttack district, Bikrampur and Nalconagar of Dhenkanal district, Sambalpur and Berhampur of Ganjam district, Jeypur, Ambaguda, Kotpad, Borigum of Koraput district, Bhadrak Engineering college and the Ramakrishna Seva Samiti of Balasore district. The Swami also spoke in different educational institutions of Bhubaneswar where intellectuals, students and university teachers listened to him with eagerness. Swami Vairagyanandaji and Swami Bhaktyanandaji accompanied the distinguished speaker whose interpretation of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideas deeply impressed and inspired thousands of Orissa people who remained grateful to the Swami for this kind service on his part.

*Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad.* The celebration which spread out for a period of one month was inaugurated on 1 February 1987 by Sri J. Vengal Rao, Hon'ble minister for industries, government of India. It ended on 1 March with a concert by Srimati M. S. Subbalakshmi. From 2 to 5 February Swami Ranganathanandaji delivered a five-day discourse on the Shantiparva portion of the Mahabharata. Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna and party staged the celebrated Shiva Tandava Nrityam on 1 February. Sri T. Navanita Rao, Vice-chancellor, Osmania University, Sri G. Venkataramana Reddy, I.A.S., prof. M. Shivaramakrishna, Osmania University, Sri K. R. Paramahansa, I.A.S., Sri Sadique Ali,



ex-governor of Tamil Nadu, Sri Shravan Kumar, chief secretary of Andhra Pradesh, and Srimati Kumud Ben Joshi, Governor of Andhra Pradesh were among the prominent speakers on different days.

*Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Puri:* The celebrations which were organized from 14 to 24 December 1986 in various parts of the holy town of Puri, included religious discourses, procession with school students of Puri, and cultural programmes. Sri B. N. Pande, Hon'ble governor of Orissa, Major B. K. Mohanty, Vice-chancellor, Swami Smarananandaji, Swami Purananandaji and Swami Dineshanandaji were the speakers on different occasion.

*Ramakrishna Math, Contai, Dist. Midnapore (W.B):* A ten-day long celebration was organized from 22 February to 3 March 1987. Meetings were held in different parts of Midnapore like Ramnagar, Paniparul, Tekhali, Nikunjapur and other places. On 1 March a long procession went round the Contai town. Swami Aptakamanandaji, Swami Jitatmanandaji, Swami Medhasanandaji, Swami Divyanandaji, Swami Swatantranandaji, Swami Bhaveswaranandaji were among the principal speakers. Two T V films on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda (English), and two Jatra performances were organized in the Contai Ashrama on different days.

*Ramakrishna Ashrama Bagerhat, Bangladesh:* A three-day long celebration was organized from 27 February to 1 March 1987 with religious discourses, Bhajans and dramatic performances on the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Among the different speakers were the Buddhist monk Dhamma Rakhita Maha Thera, Janab Sahbuddin Mohammad, Janab Tuyibur Rahman, Dr. Bandita Bhattacharya and Swami Paradevnananda.

*Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Baranagore (W.B):* The celebrations along with the Platinum Jubilee of the Ashrama were organized from 21 February to 27 February 1987. The programme which was inaugurated by Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, included a prize-distribution ceremony, an educational

exhibition, inter-school competitions and religious discourses by various eminent speakers.

*Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Gauhati (Assam):* The celebration which ran for a few days included religious discourses, a one-day spiritual retreat with 400 devotees participating, and a long procession which traversed through the Gauhati town with nearly 3,500 participants. Swamis Bhagavatanandaji, Raghunathanandaji, Prof. Sujata Barthakur were principal speakers on different days.

*Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Mylapore, Madras:* The celebrations were conducted both in the Mylapore Students' Home and its new branch in the village Malliankarane. Students performed three plays, especially one play in Tamil on Sri Ramakrishna for 1,000 villagers of Malliankarane. They also organized a procession in the city. Inter-school competitions were held. Swamis Sarvajnanandaji, Uddhavanandaji, Virupakshanandaji, Raghaveshanandaji, Kumaranandaji, Prof. S. Sundaram, Sm. G. K. Parvathi spoke on the life and teachings on Sri Ramakrishna on different days.

[Ramakrishna Seva Samithi, Bapatala (A.P.)]

Started seventeen years ago by local devotees in a rented cottage this Samithi (not-affiliated to Ramakrishna Math and Mission) began spreading the message of Sri Ramakrishna in this village area of Andhra Pradesh. Three years before they started with an initial sum of Rs. 5, an initiative to build a permanent temple-cum-Library and lecture hall for the Samithi. On 6 March 1987 along with the 150th Birth Centenary celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna this temple was inaugurated in the presence of the Swamis Uddhavanandaji, Pitambaranandaji, Nandanandaji, and Swatmanandaji of the Ramakrishna Order. A three-day celebration followed with a number of programmes for youths, processions, and public meetings addressed by these Swamis and other local dignitaries. Sri B. S. R. Anjaneyalu, the ardent and inspired Ramakrishnite, who is the founder-secretary of the Samithi, expressed his joy and thankfulness to the kind-hearted Bapatala public for their spontaneous support for the fulfilment of this long-cherished dream.

'He who knows the Supreme attains the highest'.—Tait. Upa. II 1.

Vol. II  
No. 1

MADRAS, JULY 1897

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Monthly

Lord Buddha

(Some observations on—By Swami Vivekananda)

In the course of a lecture delivered in Detroit, U.S.A., the Swami Vivekananda made the following reference to Lord Buddha—

In every religion we find one type of manhood particularly developed. The type of working without motive is most highly developed in Buddhism. Do not mistake Buddhism and Brahminism. In this country you are very apt to do so. Buddhism is one of our sects. It was founded by a great man called Gautama, who became disgusted at the eternal metaphysical discussions of his day, and the cumbrous rituals. And more especially he was disgusted with the caste system. Some people say that we are born to a certain state, and therefore we are superior to others who are not thus born. He was also disgusted with the tremendous priestcraft. He preached a religion in which there was no motive power, and was perfectly agnostic about metaphysics or theories. He was often asked, 'Is there a God, Sir', and he answered, 'I do not know, I did not tell you that.' 'Then what shall I do?' He would reply, 'Do good and be good'. There came five Brahmins, they were discussing among themselves and they asked him to settle their discussion. One said, 'Sir, my book says that God is such and such, and that this is the way to come to God.' Another said, 'That is wrong, for my book says such and such, and this is the way to come to God', and so on. He listened to all of them calmly, and then asked them one by one, 'Does any one of your books say that God becomes angry, that He ever injures any one, that He is impure?' 'No Sir, they all teach that God is pure'. 'Then, my friends, why do you not become pure and good first, and then you will know what God is.' Of course I do not endorse all his philosophy. I want a good deal of metaphysics, for myself. I entirely differ in many respects, but, because we differ, is that any reason why we should not see the beauty of the man? That is the only man who was bereft of all motive powers. There were other great men,—Krishna, for instance, a great prophet—who all said they were the incarnations of God Himself, and 'if you believe in me you will go to heaven,' and what did this man (Buddha) say with his dying breath? 'None can help you, help yourself, work out your own salvation.' And he says about himself that what is meant by Buddha (Buddha is a state just as with Jesus, 'Jesus the Christ') is this—'Buddha is the name of infinite knowledge, infinite as the sky; I, Gautama, have reached that; so you will all reach; struggle for that.' Bereft of all motive power, he did not want to go to heaven, did not want money, he gave up money and his throne and everything and went about begging his bread through the streets of India, preaching for the good of men and animals and everything, with a heart as wide as the ocean. He was the only one who was ever ready to give up his life for animals, to stop a sacrifice. He once said to a king, 'If the sacrifice of a lamb helps you to go to heaven, so, sacrificing a man will help you better, so, sacrifice me.' The king was astonished, and yet this man was without any motive power. He stands as the perfection of the active type, and the very height to which he attained, shows that through the power of work we can also attain to the greatest height. But to many the path becomes easier if they believe in God. But he would not even have anything to do with God, with religion, or with metaphysics, showing that even the man who does not believe in anything—has no metaphysics, does not go to any church, or sect, or temple, is an openly confessed materialist can attain to the highest. We have no right to judge him. I wish I had one infinite part of Buddha's heart and work. He may or may not have believed in God; that does not matter to me. He reached the same state of perfection to which others will come by Bhakti—love of God, Yoga or Jnana. Perfection does not come from belief or faith. Talk does not count for anything. Parrots can do that.

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पृष्ठ ५५०

मूल्य : १०.००

### स्वामी विवेकानन्दकृत योग पर विख्यात पुस्तकें

ज्ञानयोग

रु० ११.००

वेदान्त के गूढ़ तत्त्वों का सरल, स्पष्ट तथा सुन्दर रूप से विवेचन।

राजयोग (पातंजल योगसूत्र, सूत्रार्थ और व्याख्यासहित)

रु० ६.००

प्राणायाम-ध्यान-धारणा द्वारा समाधि-अवस्था की प्राप्ति के विषय में उपयोगी सूचनाएँ और मार्गप्रदर्शन।

कर्मयोग

रु० ६.००

‘आत्मनो मोक्षार्थं जगद्धिताय च’ इस आदर्श के अनुसार कर्म किस प्रकार किये जाएँ, जिससे वे परम शान्ति का निदान बने—इस रहस्य का विवरण।

भक्तियोग

रु० ४.००

भक्ति का सच्चा अर्थ, सच्चे भक्त का जीवन तथा भक्तिमार्ग पर अधिकाधिक अपसर होने के लिए आवश्यक गुण तथा साधनाएँ—इस विषय का अत्यन्त रोचक एवं मौलिक दर्शन।

प्रेमयोग

रु० ५.००

प्रत्येक मानव के हृदय में निहित महान् शक्ति प्रेम का जीवन के सर्वोच्च ध्येय भगवत्प्राप्ति के लिए उपयोग किस प्रकार करें, इसका अत्यन्त भावपूर्ण विवेचन।

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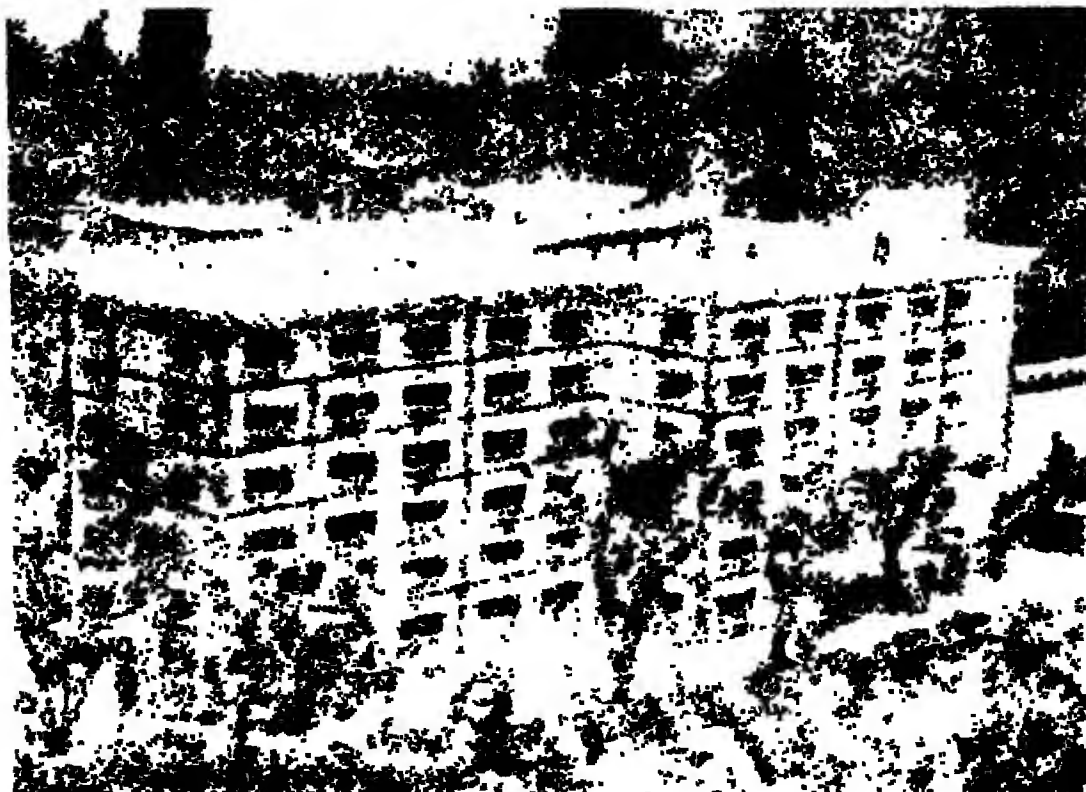
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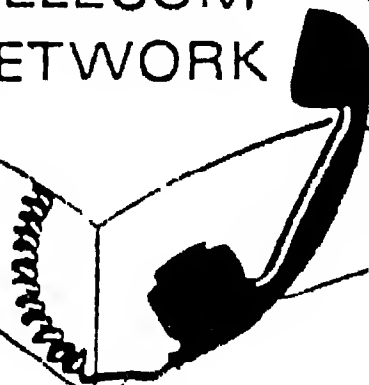
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So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold everyman a traitor who having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them I I call those men who strut about in their finery, having got all their money by grinding the poor, wretches, so long as they do not do anything for those two hundred millions who are now no better than hungry savages I

*—Swami Vivekananda*

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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 92

AUGUST 1987

No. 8

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

## ETERNAL VOICE OF INDIA

*Vidyayā vindate amitam*

'Immortality is attained through Self-knowledge'

Among men famous may I become! Swāhā. Superior to the wealthiest may I be! Swāhā Oh Lord, may I enter into Thee! Swāhā. May Thou, Oh Lord, enter into me! Swāhā. By Thee of thousand branches, Oh God, I cleanse myself. Swāhā.

Thou art the place of rest; mayest Thou illumine me, mayest Thou absorb me in Thee.

Here in this space of the heart resides the Purusha who is endued with mind, immortal and of golden effulgence

Om! The knower of Brahman attains the Supreme In reference to that the following is said:

'The Real, the Conscious, the Infinite is Brahman. He who knows that Supreme Ākāsha as existing hidden in the heart realizes all his desires along with the Omniscient Brahman.'

(Brahman is that) Whence all speech turn back with the Manas without reaching; he who knows the bliss of Brahman fears not at any time.

In the beginning was verily this non-existent. From that was generated the existent. That made Its self by Itself Therefore it is called Self-made. That one who is the self-made is verily the joy. Having attained this joy, (man) becomes blessed Who would have lived and breathed had not this sky of bliss existed! This verily It is that bestows bliss. When It finds in that invisible, unembodied, unpredicated, abodeless (Atman), the basis (of life) free from fear, then verily It transcends (all) fear. But when It makes (any) differentiation in It in the least degree, then for It, there is fear. For the unwise knower, indeed, It is fear.

He (the seeker) understood that bliss is Brahman, (because) from bliss these creatures are verily born; having been born, by bliss they live; and having departed, into bliss again they enter.

*Taittirīya Upanisad*

(1.4.3, 1.6.1, 2.1, 2.4, 2.7, 3.4)

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is based on a trip to Amarnath, made by the Jt. Editor of this journal.

WAY TO GOD REALIZATION is based on the talk given by Revered Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, the last President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, in the Mission's centre at Gauhati on 5 August 1975. The talk was originally delivered in Bengali by Revered Maharaj for the benefit of seekers of God. It was tape-recorded by Swami Ijyanandaji, Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission, Gauhati, and subsequently translated into English by Swami Bhagavatanandaji, now the head of the Mission's centre at Katihar. A rare piece of spiritual guidance, this talk answers many questions and offers very practical help for seekers who sincerely seek spiritual uplift in their own lives.

A NUCLEAR-FREE WORLD FOR THE SURVIVAL OF HUMANITY is the inaugural speech delivered by Srimat Swami Hiranmayanandaji Maharaj, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, at the religious group in the International Forum on the

same subject held in Moscow from 13 February to 16 February 1987.

HARDWAR KUMBHA MELA 1986 is written by Swami Nirgunananda of Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Kankhal. The author, an eye-witness of the entire holy festival, deals both with the mythological background and the present traditions of the Mela.

THE UNNUMBERED MILLIONS IN MALNUTRITION deals with the poverty of nutrition among the poorer classes in India. The author, Dr. Kamala Jaya Rao (M.B.B.S., M.D., Ph. D) was the Deputy Director of the Central Institute of Nutrition, Government of India, at Hyderabad.

A SACRED PLACE OF PILGRIMAGE is a very illuminating article by Swami Dhireshanandaji a senior and highly scholarly monk of the Ramakrishna Order. It was originally written in Bengali and published in the special souvenir (1986) of the Ramakrishna Math, Cossipur. The English translation has been made by Sri Nani Sarkar, Chartered Accountant, now staying at Puri.

## AMAR NATH: IMMORTALITY THROUGH DEATH

(EDITORIAL)

On an August afternoon of 1986, through the deep, dark, and heavenly woods of Pahalgam, two pilgrims for Amarnath were winding through zig-zag mountain paths, the way to their first halt at Chandanwari. It was a small plain surrounded on all sides by the steep-rising, dark, and green mountains. Huge dark pines stood like last sentinels at this doorway to Mahadeva. The first night passed at

Chandanwari. All throughout the night they heard the stream rushing out of a glacier just below the tent. A short drizzle brought the temperature very much down.

Next morning in the half-light of the early dawn, they started on an almost impossible journey, 24 miles on horse back in a single day. Before the sunrise they were crossing the first glacier at Chandanwari. Morning smoke was rising from one

or two huts at the feet of dark pines. An icy river flowed over huge boulders on the road side. Only after two miles there was waiting for them a steep climb of one mile through a zig-zag stoney path, which reminds one of the spiral paths of Dante's purgatorio. On the high mountains a family of Gurjar nomads was grazing a flock of sheep and goats. It was nearly 8 O'clock when the pilgrims reached the top of this place known as 'Pissu Ghat'. There was the last tent of the Gurjar nomads. They had a glass of tea and started again on horseback. It was now absolutely silent and solitary. A golden sunlight lighted the few bushes on the road side. All throughout the road they only saw remnants of the broken tents where only nine days before thousands of pilgrims halted, but now it was all bare. Even the bridges across the small rivers had been removed and they had to cross them either on horseback or on foot. Vegetation seemed now fewer and fewer. The last human habitation they had already left behind at Chandanwari.

Trudging along a lonely long way of five miles, the pilgrims reached the lake of Sheshnag which looked mysteriously blue and beautiful. By this time the temperature had come down almost near zero degree. Despite the morning sunlight a fiercely cold wind was blowing, which shivered even the bones. For a while they rested on the solitary bank of this vast and mysterious lake surrounded by snow and ice. Molten glaciers were merging into it from mountains standing at its back. A few yellow grass flowers blossomed here and there in the stoney area. Absolutely lonely, this place is, indeed, the place of gods. People still claim they have seen the mysterious big serpent in this icy lake.

From Sheshnag after just a few sips of a strangely hilly tea, the real journey began in almost absolute loneliness. On one side

of the narrow stoney path stood the steep mountain with huge boulders, and on the other, the frozen glaciers or steep gorges reaching far, far below. The two pilgrims and their muslim horseman were the only living souls in the vast panorama. Now they were climbing up to the terrible height of 14, 800 feet known as Mahagunas pass. In Kashmiri language Mahagunas means the most deadly serpent. Indeed this is a terrible pass where oxygen is less and climbing sometimes becomes very difficult. When they arrived at the pass it was high noon. Nature suddenly appeared in a strange and a frightening form. Vast grey stone mountains reared their hands on both sides. On their surface was clinging heavy snow, most of which did not melt during the last few centuries. All green was gone. Before Sheshnag they left the last trees behind. Now it was all rock. Silence was all-engulfing and almost ominous. The entire panorama seemed to be meditating. One could feel that to talk here was a sacrilege. Nature does not allow any one to break the eternal silence of Shiva's meditation.

Now both the pilgrims left their horses and started walking along the steep path down to the river bed of an ice cold stream. This place is known as 'Pushpa Patri'. May be that in ancient times some Rishis must have collected flowers, the last grass flowers that bloom in this low-lying valley. As they proceeded, on both sides lay the dead bodies of horses, not less than a dozen, who only slipped to death just seven days before.<sup>1</sup> Many of these took their riders also along with them to the house of death. It is in fact, an act of surrender, to take

1. This trip was after the yatra season. During the yatra season, the Jammu & Kashmir Govt makes elaborate arrangements for the safety and all kinds of help, including postal and medical facilities, emergency help, and others, for all pilgrims.



this death-delying trip for the grace of Shiva.

After nearly two hours of tough horse riding they reached the vast valley of 'Panchtarani'. This was just like a vast field, encircled on all sides by towering mountains. Over this valley pass five small rivulets. This was the last halt before reaching Amarnath. They got down from the horses, took a little tea, hired a tent, and kept their luggage.

By 3 O'clock the pilgrims were again on horseback. Only four miles ahead was Amarnath. A sort of intoxication had already gripped them. Both of them were reciting Shiva Mahimna Stotra. The terrible pain due to nine hours' of horse riding was forgotten in a sort of throbbing expectation. Shiva was waiting for the devotees! Generally people take the trip from Pahelgam to Panchtarani in two days, and from Panchtarani to Amarnath cave next day. But they took it all on a single day. By 4 O'clock they were at the top of the last pass. This journey was really a fierce trekking and the horse, due to disbalance, shook one of them severely. He slipped down from its back, but fortunately fell on the right side. If it would have been on the left, not a single piece of bone could be found by any one. The gorge plunges straight down to a depth of nearly 2,000 feet, below where a river flows with a terrible sound.

In the fading glow of afternoon, the horseman showed them the colossal face of the cave of Amarnath from a distance. It was like a dream coming true. The few last pilgrims had left the area nearly half an hour before and a dark cloud was covering the entire valley, with the ominous prospect of an imminent snowfall. A few drops of rain began to drizzle in. It seemed that it was the last journey of their life, as if they were going to Death in this lonely evening. Exhausted, but strangely inspired,

they reached the steps of the Amarnath cave. One could listen to the excitement in their hearts. The entire place was awfully lonely. Just two or three last tents of the Gurjar nomads were still there. Keeping the small bundle of flowers and sweets for Shiva with the horseman, they went to the icy river of 'Amar Ganga'. There was no water. The river was frozen. They went a little up from where the absolutely white ice water trickles down. Both of them took a very hasty bath. Instantly the whole body began to freeze. Temperature must be running much less than zero degree, and a severe gust of icy wind was blowing. It was 5 p.m. The whole valley looked dark and ominous. Suddenly (and it was a real moment of theophany) from the western side came a golden sunlight through the clouds. The mouth of the cave was at once lit, as it were, with all the sunlight in the universe. Every stone began to radiate. As they started climbing up the long flight of stairs, they saw the auspicious pigeon chirping at the very entrance of the cave. Virtually fasting from the morning, they were exhausted to the limit. The horseman stretched his helping hands, but clutching the iron railings, they finally entered the cave. There was absolutely no person anywhere. Only three priests, huddling in terrible winter in a corner were preparing for the coming night. Both the pilgrims went straight to ice lingam which had now become shorter in height. Exhausted but intensely thrilled one of them literally fell and lay down on the body of the ice lingam for sometime. The priests did not protest. On the contrary they came forward and helped to offer the ritualistic worship to Shiva. But rituals seemed unnecessary. The ice became living and prayers began to pour out for the welfare of many souls who sought this prayer. Nearly 50 minutes passed. Then the mind

suddenly expanded to infinity, and the lips began to pray for all living beings on the earth. Are not all living beings looking forward to His Grace? Ah! Who else but Shiva could lift them up from the regions of death, to immortality! A strange assurance and calmness filled and lifted the heart.

The only way to immortality is through death. Throughout the entire journey, right from Sheshnag to Amarnath they saw only death, silence, loneliness and the fierce aspects of nature. It was the face of Divine Mother in terrible grey and death-dealing white. Is it not the face of 'Dhumavati'—a face of Divine Mother, which the Rishis have seen during their death-defying sadhana? Dhumavati sits resting on a rock, like an old dying woman with eyes in sockets, her white hair flowing, and her grey skin showing signs of imminent extinction. From Mother Dhumavati to Shiva as Mahakala is only one step. Beyond Mahakala, the all-destroying time, stands the immutable face of Shiva, the immortal Amarnath. Nachiketa must have had a similar experience before reaching immortality.

Evening darkness began to descend. The pilgrims got again on horseback. A sort of unwillingness to leave Shiva was haunting them. As the horses started moving, they looked again and again back at the vast mouth of the lonely cave. Shiva stands there with a world of love and blessings! But now He was within them. It was as if they heard His voice. 'I am Shiva—the Great Lord. I am within you, within all living beings. I am the Chit-Ananda-Shiva within you, of whom you sing so often. I am the immortal Soul, the Atman. Atman alone abides. I am also the Brahman, the Ultimate all-pervading Reality. I am the Self hiding within your heart. All your life, all your actions and struggles, all your achievements are nothing compared to the

majesty of the Self. The Self within is infinitely greater than all its manifestations'. A great joy and assurance lifted the mind and filled the heart. A deep peace reigned inside and outside. The dark icy valley of Panchtarani, the rushing streams, all seemed to be blessing the devotees of Shiva. Death was over. The bliss of Divine Grace had already descended. The darkness and drizzling outside on the lonely path, seemed to be suddenly illumined with a strange joy and assurance welling up in the soul.

\* \* \* \*

Since the earliest periods of human civilization the Himalayas has inspired lofty emotions. The Indo-Aryans of the Vedic times felt the pervasive power of these mountains in many ways. The *Rg-Veda* (10.121) extols Hiranyagarbha, the Personal God behind this universe. 'To him of right belong by his own power the snow-clad mountains, the world streams and the sea.' The Bhumi-sukta of the *Atharva-Veda* (12.1) speaks again: 'Your hills, O Earth, your snow-clad mountain peaks, your forests, may they show us kindness'. *Rg-Veda* (1.154) again refers to the 'Bull who resides upon the mountains'. The music of the Himalayan streams brought divine feelings to the seers of *Rg-Veda* (10.94). 'O rocks, O mountains, swiftly clashing, you bring to God's ears your rhythmic din.' The rhythmic din of *Hara Hara Vyom Vyom*, the Himalayan pilgrims will always hear when the rushing streams fall like thunder with the sound of *Vyom, Vyom* on the rocks, and then flow out in frightening speed with the sound *Hara, Hara*.

The northern mountains according to *Satapatha Brahmana* (1.8.1.1-10) is the place of 'Manu's descent' after the great deluge. It is at the foot of these mountains that Manu, the primal father of Hindu

mythology, took to austerities and worship, and thus created the Manavas—the human dynasty. The Himalayas is indeed the first and the sublimest symbol of divinity. 'Of the mountains I am the Himalayas' says Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita. The Himalayas inspired the first and the highest human conception of God. Shiva is the primal God, the Great God—the Adi Deva, Mahadeva. From this first concept of God, all the other concepts of divinity have subsequently grown in India, where millions of gods and goddesses are worshipped in millions of ways. 'Why have we got so many gods and goddesses?' Someone asked Vivekananda in the South. 'Because we have the Himalayas', he answered.

The Himalayas has in fact been the source of human civilization which flourished during the Vedic period on the banks of the various rivers that flowed from it. In the *Brhadāranyaka Upanisad* (3.8) Yajnavalkya reminds Gargi, 'O Gargi, the rivers flow, some in the East, others in the West from the white mountains.' The Himalayas inspired contemplative mood. 'The mountains, as it were contemplates' says *Chandogya Upanisad* (7.6.1). The Himalayas stands as the symbol of the eternally unmoving and the immutable. 'The firmest mountains' (*Rg-Veda* 7.79) reminds us of the unmoving, steady, eternally calm, and meditative Shiva in the Himalayas. The unmelting snow on these mountains must have inspired the Indian concept of Shiva as the 'mountain of silver' (Rajatagiriniva). In fact saints, throughout the ages, had had visions of all-white Shiva. Shankara, inspired by the all-white peaks of the Himalayas, wrote of Shiva: 'Oh, Shiva, Thy body is white, white is Thy smile, the human skull in Thy hand is white. Thy axe, Thy bull, Thy earrings, all are white. The Ganga flowing out in foams from your matted locks, is white. The crescent moon on Thy brow is white. O,

all-white Shiva, give us the boon of complete sinlessness in our lives.'<sup>2</sup>

But along with the feeling of lofty sublimity, the Himalayas also inspired awe, and perhaps a reverential fear. Its inaccessible heights, where nature of any kind ceases to exist, inspired the thoughts that it is virtually a vast cremation ground of no-life, and the puny mortals thriving far below on the warm plains must know that the Himalayas is the valley of death. The Himalayan ascent is described in the Vedic and Puranic tradition as the way of final departure from this life, the pathway to the Mahaprasthan. In *Rg-Veda* (10.58) two priests pray to the dead soul of their brother Subandhu to return from the mountains where his departed spirit now has gone:

Your spirit which has gone afar  
to the highest mountains  
may return to you again  
that it may live and dwell here.

Death has always haunted humanity since the earliest days. And immortality has been a spiritual passion with men. In the Upanishads this struggle to escape death and embrace immortality has been dealt with in detail. In the *Brhadāranyaka Upanisad* (1.2.7) we find that even the Hiranyagarbha, the primal Personal God behind this phenomenal universe, because of Its desire for creating a world of duality, was threatened with death. It is through Self-knowledge that it had to overcome death, when death became one with the Self of the Hiranyagarbha, the undying all-pervading Reality. 'He who knows thus triumphs over death, death does not overcome him, because Death becomes the Self.' Death stalks over us so long as we are condemned to live in a world of duality,

2. Shankaracharya, *Shivaparadha kshamapana stotra*.

the world of I and Thou, this and that, here and there, now and then. In the realization of our Oneness with the universe, our little individuality ceases to exist; so also death.

'One day a drop of water fell into the vast ocean', Vivekananda answered in a parable when someone in the west had protested against the loss of so-called individuality, 'When it found itself there, it began to weep and complain just as you are doing. The great ocean laughed at the drop of water. "Why do you weep?" it asked, "I do not understand. When you join me, you join all your brothers and sisters, the other drops of water of which I am made. You become the ocean itself. If you wish to leave me, you have only to rise up on a sunbeam into the clouds. From there you can descend again, a little drop of water, a blessing and a benediction to the thirsty earth."<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere in the West Vivekananda harped on the same theme, 'Let us realize that we are the infinite power. Who put a limit to the power of the mind? Let us realize we are all mind. Every drop has the whole ocean in it.'<sup>4</sup>

We remember the oft-quoted mantra of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1.3.28) 'Take me from evil to good; Take me from darkness to light; Take me from death to immortality.' When the mantra says 'Take me from evil to good', verily evil is death, and good is immortality. So it only says, 'Take me from death to immortality, that is, make me immortal.' In the mantra 'Take me from darkness to light', verily darkness means death, and light is

immortality. So it only says 'Take me from death to immortality.'

What is the way to immortality? The answer is: Knowledge of the Self. How to attain that knowledge of Self? By Strength—physical, intellectual and above all spiritual. *Nāyamatmā balahinena labhyah*, 'The Self cannot be attained by a man bereft of strength', says the *Mūṇḍaka Upaniṣad*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.4.25) says *abhayaṃ vai Brahman* 'Brahman is indeed fearlessness. He who knows the Self as above becomes fearless Brahman' Probably this concept of realizing the Self through the avenue of death experience was most beautifully illustrated by the story of the boy Nachiketa of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. For the sake of Truth, the boy went undaunted to the house of death, and there stood in superhuman courage, face to face with death. Death had to reveal its secret and confer immortality to such a fearless soul embracing death for the sake of immortality. In Indian tradition Nachiketa stands as a symbol of human struggle for attaining Truth in the face of the most terrible struggles and obstacles in life.

The concept of attaining immortality through death is also reflected in the Christian idea of Palingenesis which means rebirth, after the severest of sacrifices in life, into a transfigured life of higher spiritual dimensions. This is what Jesus meant when he spoke to Nicodemus: 'Except a man be born again he cannot enter the Kingdom of God'. This is the idea which is expressed in the lines describing the Pauline transfiguration, a rebirth of Saul into Paul after a theophany of Christ, 'It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory.. It is sown a natural body, it is raised in spiritual body... The first man is of the earth, earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven.' (1, Corinthians, *The New Testament* 42-44).

3 Eastern and Western Admirers, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1961) P 267-68.

4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972) Vol. 1, p. 509.

It is on the death of the old self with all its burning desires for a sense-world, that the spiritual body is born. 'The old cat must die', as the proverb goes. 'This little puny self must be sacrificed. This is the truth symbolized by baptism into a new life, the death of the old man, the birth of the new—the perishing of the false self, the realization of the Atman, the one Self of the universe', Vivekananda says.<sup>5</sup>

What are the spiritual dimensions of this new transfigured Self, our Shiva nature? Here all ego is silenced for ever, and an all-encompassing love grows. 'The highest men are calm, silent and unknown,' says Vivekananda.<sup>6</sup> They are like Shiva Himself. 'Power to help mankind is with the silent ones who live and love and withdraw their own personality entirely. They never say 'me' or 'mine'. They are only blessed in being the instruments to help others. They, are wholly identified with God. They are the true Jivanmuktas—the absolutely selfless' <sup>7</sup> says Vivekananda. He reminds us that the way is struggle in the face of death, 'If there is any road to Heaven it is through hell...when the soul has wrestled with circumstance and has met death, a thousand times death on the way, but nothing daunted, has struggled forward again and again, and yet again—then the soul comes out as a giant and laughs at the ideal he has been struggling for, because he realizes how much greater is he than the ideal'.<sup>8</sup>

The annual pilgrimage to Amarnath always glows with this great promise for the thousands of pilgrims, a promise of

rebirth into a higher life. Certainly this one pilgrimage sheds many of our past karmas. No pilgrimage in India is as difficult as this, and no pilgrimage brings us 'nearer to God' than the one to Amarnath. This pilgrimage reminds us that Shiva, the God of immortality, presides over the valley of death. He, the eternal life, the immortality, the Existence Absolute, has to be approached through an austere self-denying journey to God. Shiva sits in the midst of human skulls, and the ashes of the burnt realities of the world. This cremation ground, the favourite seat of Mahadeva, is the symbol of that pure heart where all desires have been burnt. Immortality is gained, death is overcome only when the extinction of all desires of the relative world is assured.

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Eighty-nine years ago in the same month of August, Vivekananda, came to this holy Amarnath and stood face to face with the Lord. He came for pilgrimage not to any temple, but to the living presence of Shiva Himself, in this almost inaccessible heights of the Himalayas. For the last few days during this great journey he was all full of Shiva. With all humility he became one with the rest of pilgrims who were walking all the way in those days from Srinagar to the Amarnath cave. He was 'living mostly on one meal a day and seeking no company much, save that of sadhus'.<sup>9</sup> In the evenings he was sitting along with the naked swamis round the *dhuni* fire by the side of the rushing river Ledar at Pahalgam and again at the first glacier at Chandanwari. They were plying him with volley of questions. With him was going his daughter-disciple, Nivedita. Her master was

5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1964) Vol. 8, p. 24

6. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) Vol. 1, p. 106

7. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1964) Vol. 8, p. 31.

8. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1973) Vol. 5, p. 252

9. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1967) Vol. 1, p. 348.

going 'to dedicate'<sup>10</sup> her to the Lord Shiva: 'for the good of the many, for the welfare of the many.'

In the West he was playing the role of Nataraja, Shiva dancing and destroying what was putrid and dark, and creating what was effulgent and divine. The words of all-renouncing monk sounded like Shiva's drum. 'It is for the sannyasins, Shiva's demons, to rend the skies with their shouts of "Hara! Hara! Shambho!"', he wrote from the West, to inspire the drooping spirit of his brother-disciples.<sup>11</sup>

But today Vivekananda was coming to Holy Amarnath as one of the old orthodox pilgrims of India, taking bath in all the places prescribed by the tradition, observing fasts and counting beads. He was virtually alone 'contriving to elude the observation completely'<sup>12</sup> even from the nearest and dearest. Finally he took the bath in Amarganga, and entered the cave in a loin cloth, a Suka, a Shiva, in human form. Like Moses he entered the 'burning bush', the grotto with the Great God waiting for him. 'With a smile he knelt first at one end of the semi-circle, then at the other.'<sup>13</sup> A great emotion of the living presence of Shiva overwhelmed him. He just evaded a collapse. His feelings since his childhood that he would meet death in a Shiva temple in the mountains, became true.

When he left the vast mountain caves 'the heavens had opened', 'I thought the ice *linga* was Shiva Himself. It was all worship. I never enjoyed any religious place so much he said.'<sup>14</sup> His fast broken, he took his meal

on a rock below by the ice-stream along with a naked swami. Still he was in an exuberance of emotion. He was all full of, as Nivedita saw, "Shiva and the cave and the great verge of vision." He talked of the ice *linga*, the radiant symbol of Shiva and how it was first discovered. With his unflinching vision he saw that it was a blessed party of shepherds, the Gurjar nomads who, in search of their flocks, one summer day entered inadvertently in the colossal cave, and was awed by the presence of the Lord Himself in the unmelting ice-pillar radiating in the virgin cave of this high Himalayas, a spot till then untrammelled by the touch of human feet.

The worship of the *linga*, according to Vivekananda, was originated from the famous hymn in the *Atharva-Veda Samhita* sung in praise of the *vāpa-stambha* which represented the 'Eternal Brahman'. 'The fire, the smoke, the ashes, flames, the blackwood and the ox connected with this Vedic sacrifice gave place to the conceptions of brightness of Shiva's body, His tawny matted-hair, His blue throat, and the riding on the bull of Shiva and so on--just so the *yūpa-stambha* gave place in time to the Shiva-Linga, and was deified as the high Devahood of Sri Shankara... In the *Līṅga-Purāṇa*, the same hymn is expanded in the stories meant to establish the glory of the great *stambha* and the superiority of Mahadeva.'<sup>15</sup>

Vivekananda's life itself was the biggest sacrifice made at the feet of Shiva. To someone well-known to him he expressed this feeling through a few lines of *Yajur-Veda Samhita*: 'In this world in search of wealth, Thou art O Lord, the greatest jewel I have found. I sacrifice myself unto Thee... In search of someone to love, Thou art the One Beloved I have found. I sacrifice

10. Shankari prasad Basu (Ed) *Letters of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1982) Vol 1, p. 18.

11. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) Vol 6, p. 356

12. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (1967) Vol 1, p. 350.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 351

14. *Ibid.*

15. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1978) Vol. 4, p. 424.

myself unto Thee'.<sup>16</sup> And this sacrifice made his heart, a cremation ground of white ashes, bereft of everything except an intense love for God and an equally intense compassion for suffering humanity. Vivekananda himself became radiant like Shiva with the white of sattva—the intense white colour of love—as he used to say. Like Shiva, he, too, drank the poison of human suffering. For him Shiva was the highest conception of Personal God—'the totality of all souls, not of human alone'.<sup>17</sup> 'Shiva is - the sublime aspect of God', he would say.<sup>18</sup> He would talk of Uma and Shiva—Immanent Mother and Transcendent Shiva—the two aspects of the One inseparable Reality. This idea fascinated him always. 'It beats all mythology hollow' he would say.<sup>19</sup> To him Shiva was the ideal husband 'whose life was in Uma'.<sup>20</sup> To the Indians he held up the all-renouncing Shankara, the husband of Uma as the eternal object of worship. Shiva is the very soul of Indian life. 'Here in India the old Shiva will always be playing on his damaru',<sup>21</sup> he said in order to uphold the basic spirituality of Indian life.

At Amarnath the dear God Shiva stood there for the blessed monk with the boon of immortality. He felt the 'grace' of the Lord. He revealed with a feeling of great assurance how the Great God had granted him the boon, 'not to die, until he himself

should give consent'.<sup>22</sup> To the blessed western disciple who witnessed with awe and reverence this great moment of theophany, the master reminded that the pilgrimage to Amarnath never goes without bringing a grace of divinity in the pilgrim's life, 'You do not understand. But you have made the pilgrimage, and it will go on working. Causes must bring their effect. You will understand better afterwards. The effect will come.'<sup>23</sup>

Probably this vision of the radiant Shiva at Amarnath was reflected in Vivekananda's own composition on Shiva:

For whom all gloom and darkness have dispersed  
That radiant light, white, beautiful  
As bloom of lotus white is beautiful.  
Whose laughter loud sheds Knowledge luminous<sup>24</sup>

It was Shiva who guided him all throughout. The invitation from Pramadas Mitra, to visit Varanasi was to him 'the call of Vishvesvara'.<sup>25</sup> Shiva was his power in days of unbearable stress. During the days of extreme uncertainty and helplessness in the West he confided this trust in Shiva, to a western mother:

Lord! how hard it is for man to believe in Thee  
and Thy mercies! Shiva! Shiva! Where is the  
right kind and where is the bad, mother? It is  
all He! In the tiger and in the lamb, in the  
saint and sinner all He! In Him I have taken  
my refuge—body, soul and Atman Will He  
leave me now after carrying me in His arms all  
my life? Not a drop will be in the ocean, not  
a twig in the deepest forest, not a crumb in  
the house of the god of wealth, if the Lord is  
not merciful Streams will be in the desert and  
the beggar will have plenty if He wills it. He

16. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981) p. 194.

17. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1971) Vol. 8, p. 266

18. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) Vol. 6, p. 116.

19. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, Op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 226.

20. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) Vol. 6, p. 373

21. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1973) Vol. 5, p. 445

22. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (1967) Vol. 1, p. 351

23. Ibid

24. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (1978) Vol. 4, p. 503

25. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) Vol. 6, p. 204.



seeth the sparrow's fall. Are these but words, mother, or literal, actual life?

Thou art my right, Thou my wrong, my Shiva. Lord, since a child I have taken refuge in Thee. Thou wilt be with me in the tropics or at the poles, on the tops of mountains or in the depth of oceans. My stay—my guide in life—my refuge—my friend—my teacher—my God—my real Self. Thou wilt never leave me, *never*. I know it for sure<sup>26</sup>

During this trying period, he wrote to a brother disciple, 'Does a companion of Shiva die so quickly?'<sup>27</sup> His trust in Shiva never faltered. He knew he was always with Shiva, his own SELF. Even in the West this Shiva-mood never left him. In the quiet of Ridgely Manor, U.S.A. he reminded his disciple 'The Guru was always Shiva, and was always to be worshipped as Shiva—because he sat under the tree to teach and destroy ignorance.'<sup>28</sup> The longing to go to the Himalayas, to be lost in those deep forests,

ravines, and glaciers, and most of all, to die in the eternally white cremation ground of Shiva, the icy mountains, was a sort of passion with Vivekananda. A year after the pilgrimage to Amarnath, in the West he was buried in this dream, and words came out like a strange soliloquy:

'This body is going any way I shall go with the hard tapasya—I will say 1,000 Om a day and with fasting Alone, alone, by the Ganges—in the Himalayas—saying Hara, Hara. The Freed One, the Freed One I will change my name once more and this time none shall know and I will never come back to any one again.'<sup>29</sup>

In his immortal letter of 18 April 1900, ringing with the tune of final departure, he sang, like the blind Shiva devotee of Varanasi: 'Shiva, O Shiva, carry my boat to the other shore'. The great departure, the Mahaprasthan, of the Living Shiva of the age was also in the way of Shiva. Vivekananda, as assured by Amarnath, left his body voluntarily in the majesty and bliss of the final meditation. Death was already conquered for him and immortality attained in the fullness of Self-realization.

<sup>26</sup>. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, Op. cit., p. 219-20

<sup>27</sup>. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1971) Vol. 8, p. 402

<sup>28</sup>. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 218

<sup>29</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

## WAY TO GOD REALIZATION

SRIMAT SWAMI VIRESWARANANDAJI MAHARAJ

Bhagavan Shankaracharya in the beginning of his commentary on the *Brahmasūtras* wrote a few sentences that nobody, uptill now, could change or refute. He said, 'First of all the Self and the non-self, the spirit and matter, both are of opposite nature. None of these is similar with the other. In what way are they contradictory? *Tamah prakāśavat viruddhāh*—these are opposite

like light and darkness. Like the day and night they are contradictory to each other. In the same way, the Self and the non-self, sentient and insentient are of different nature. Therefore, it is impossible that we can combine or mix-up these two. But such is the play of Mahamaya that we mix-up these two contradictory things and say 'I am in this room, I am a Ksatriya, I



am a Brahmana, I am fair, I am dark, I am happy, I am unhappy, my family, my son, my husband, my house, my estate, my business etc'. We say all these.

Now, in the light of what was said in the beginning, how can I be here, in this room? How can the all-pervading Atman be in this room, sitting here? Identifying the Self with the body I say that I am sitting here. But the body is insentient (inert), and the Self is sentient, and I mix-up the two. In the same way I say, 'I am a Ksatriya, I am a Brahmana, etc.'

Next, ascribing the functions of the mind to the Atman I say 'I am happy, I am unhappy' and all such things. Again, I superimpose the external things on the Atman and say 'my family, my husband, my son' and speak of material things—'My house, my estate etc.' It is impossible to mix-up these two because they are contradictory to each other. In spite of this, these two are getting mixed up. What is the cause of it? Ignorance is the cause. This ignorance is also Maya, which is without beginning. This ignorance causes us to combine the two. This knot between the sentient and insentient is the cause of our bondage. If we can separate the two sentient Atman from the insentient matter, and if we can realize we are that Atman, we have no connection whatsoever with the matter, we shall get liberation. Those who have realized God are able to cut this knot of matter and spirit; they alone will be free from all doubts; their accumulated karma being destroyed, they will attain liberation.

One seer has said, 'I have seen that great Being who is beyond darkness, beyond Maya. Without knowing that Being, there is no freedom from the hands of death'. Therefore to realize God is the only way for us by which we can be free from misery, and destroy the ignorance. This ignorance is veiling our knowledge,

and so we can't see the sentient Atman. What is this ignorance? It is the feeling of me and mine. 'This is ours'—it is the ignorance. 'Me and mine,'—is the ignorance, and 'You and yours' is the knowledge. 'Me and mine is ignorance,'—the meaning of this is that I am selfish. I am only satisfying my little 'I'. This is selfishness. If we can be totally unselfish then we shall realize God. Swami Vivekananda said that absolute unselfishness is equal to pure love, equal to God. When we are entirely unselfish, then we shall attain pure Love. And God is of the nature of pure love. Thus one may get the vision of God.

Now, how can the ignorance which is there, will be destroyed? What is the way by which this feeling of me and mine, will be destroyed? We are only practising the vows, going on pilgrimage, giving money in charity—all these will not be of any use. Shankaracharya said that all these will be of no avail. Till we do not get the knowledge, we will not have liberation. All these are only secondary things. You give away in charity, or go on pilgrimage, or perform ritualistic worship, or visit temples and offer money there, or whatever vows you undertake— all these are ordinary things. Moreover in practice religion has become today a mere social custom. Whatever practices or local customs on which the pundits have put their own stamps, these alone have become our religion (the religion of the masses). We do not consider anything else to be religious. We obey only these local customs. Moreover those who do not observe those local customs, are considered by us as irreligious. We think ourselves to be religious because we follow the local custom. This is a narrow understanding that is growing in us. But those whom we call irreligious, may be sincerely following the truth or a righteous path. But still we call them irreligious. This happens because of the narrow

understanding. 'Whatever I do is the only religion. Anything outside it cannot be religion.'

When humanity suffers from this wrong understanding then the Lord comes. He gives us the right understanding of the Dharma. Now the same thing happened in this world again. Sri Ramakrishna came and showed us what true religion is. Religion is the realization of God. This is the aim of life. Swamiji also said that religion is realization. He also said that the true religion is to awaken the sleeping Atman in us by controlling external and internal nature. This is the aim of religion. How can we do that? By following any one of the yogas—Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Raja-yoga. If not by one method, by combining all we can manifest Atman or Brahman within. When the Atman is manifested then alone can we be liberated. This is religion. The temples, scriptures, rituals, vows, and all are secondary things. But what we do is that we make secondary thing, primary, and then lose sight of the primary one.

Now, the first proof of religion is renunciation. Without renunciation there can be no religion. If there is no dispassion towards 'me and mine' and other enjoyments of the world, nothing in the world can give me peace. Without this understanding nobody can be religious. 'Let me be entangled in this world; when I get blows, then only shall I try to understand'—this way is not correct. We must try to enquire if there is any other way. When one gets this thought, then one thinks: 'whatever there is in the world is in the jaws of death; everything will be destroyed in course of time; birth and death, disease and old age are the characteristics of this world'. Buddha had experienced in this way when he went on a visit to the city. He saw that human beings suffer from birth, death, old age and disease, and these

are the characteristics of the world. He renounced the world in order to find a way out of this misery. So, there cannot be peace in the world. Troubles there will be in the world. So, Sri Krishna said, 'If you want peace, then come to Me, adore Me and worship Me.' For that reason we have also to follow any one of the four methods of Yoga and progress towards God.

Among the four Yogas, the Jnana Yoga (the path of knowledge) teaches us,—'I am not the body, nor the mind, nor the intelligence nor the ego'—in this way I am separating the Atman from all other things and reach myself to the Atman. When I shall be established in that thought, that meditation, then Self-knowledge will dawn on me. In the same way the Karma Yoga means not to think about oneself but to think about others. When I work for others I shall entirely forget about myself. I shall always remember others, and in the end I shall be one with the whole world. Then only shall I be able to serve the world. That itself is the realization of God. 'Me and mine' will be entirely effaced. In the same way, in the path of Bhakti, whatever I do is for the Lord. I shall thus lose myself in the thought of God. That itself is the realization of God. The same thing happens in the path of Raja Yoga also. When 'I and mine' is given up and mind is concentrated on God, all other thought-waves die out and only the thought of God remains. When mind becomes absorbed in the thought of God, it will be still like the candle-flame in a windless place. Then you will have the vision of God. Then there will be no other thought in the mind. In any way we should forget our little 'I', and remember the big 'I', that is, God, and be absorbed in Him. Out of these four Yogas we have to practise fruitfully any one, or two, or all in our lives.

The path of Bhakti is the easiest. Those who have intense dispassion can undertake the path of knowledge. Generally, for most of the people, the path of Bhakti is suitable. The practices of Raja Yoga are very difficult, but the path of Bhakti is easy. Generally, people are attached to the world and also have the love of God. The number of such people are more in the world. So, for such people, Sri Ramakrishna says, the path of Bhakti prescribed by Narada, is good. We generally follow the path of Bhakti. We begin this path of Bhakti as a dualist. I am separate and the Lord is separate. I have to attain the vision of God. In this way we start. Finally, through His grace we realize the non-dual or the formless aspect of God. Through the grace of God alone we shall realize the formless aspect of God. Just as Sri Ramakrishna had the vision of Mother Kali first, and then the realization of the attributeless Brahman, in the same manner, even if we start with the duality, we shall have the vision of God or of the chosen deity. Then it will not take much time to realize the formless God or the attributeless Brahman. Whatever chosen deity or God you are worshipping, through the grace of that God, you will realize quickly the formless aspect of God.

But to realize first this God with form or the chosen deity is an uphill task. For that you have to start with the external rituals, then japa, and then meditation. The external ritual is the most inferior. Then comes japa. When the mind will be ready as a result of performing the external worship, then japa should be performed. The japa will make the mind ready for meditation. One must get absorbed in meditation. Meditation is the best of all. Most of us who want to practise religion, lay stress on the external only. They do not stress upon japa and meditation. They go to the shrine and busy themselves in offering

water or flowers to all the gods and goddesses, and thus spend away their time. They don't have time to perform japa, and meditation is a far cry. Such people, again say 'My mind doesn't become steady.' How can the mind be steady? It cannot be steady without practising japa and meditation. Many think that if they get initiated, then the mind will be steady. This is a different matter. One has to practise for years together. Holy Mother tells us, 'My dear, what the saints and sages could not attain in many lives (they could attain God only after hard spiritual practices), do you wish to get that realization in an easy way?' After this, she says, 'But now Sri Ramakrishna has come and made everything easy. One will get illumination if one practises a little.' But one has to practise that 'little'. If that 'little' we do not practise, then how shall we attain it? Generally I have seen those who perform japa—I am not talking about all—spend their time in the external worship only, and perform japa for 100 times. That is all they do. They don't understand the necessity to perform the japa more than 108 times. The more japa you practise the more quickly you progress towards God.

What is japa? What is *mantra*? Mind will be withdrawn from the external world and concentrated on the lotus feet of the God. This is *mantra*. And the seed (*bijamantra*) is that by the help of which you will have the awakening of the spiritual power within you, the power that will take you towards the Lord. Therefore, to perform japa is the main spiritual practice. When you repeat *mantra*, all power dwells in that. Without repetition that power will not be awakened. Therefore, merely repeating the *mantra* 108 times will not do. How will you progress? Therefore, you have to repeat the *mantra* as many times as possible. If you are doing it, it's good. But there are many who are

not at home most of the time. For them it is said that they should repeat the *mantra* mentally, while doing their work, just as Sri Krishna advised Arjuna, 'Therefore remember me in all your duties and fight'. These two things go together. While you remember the Lord, the fight should not stop. You are commander-in-chief of the Pandavas. If you remain inactive for even a short time, then what course the battle will take? Therefore you have always to be on your toes, and also remember Me constantly. These two things are to be done simultaneously. Similarly for us along with the work in the world, the name of the Lord should be on the lips. We should remember Him in the mind. If we can do this then in a short time we can make it up. Therefore one should always try to remember Him in the mind. One must have the clear understanding that repeating the *mantra* only for 108 times is not sufficient. Getting initiation and repeating the *mantra* only for 108 times—that is not the real significance of the initiation. You have to repeat His name at all times. Holy Mother said: 'Repeat the Mantra 10/15 thousand times and let me see whether the mind becomes steady or not.' You can perform a little less than that but not merely 108 times. What will you get by merely repeating for 108 times? Therefore put more stress on japa. If one repeats the *mantra* and thinks about one's chosen deity then mind gets automatically absorbed in meditation. You will not be aware but your repetition of *mantra*, and counting the number will naturally stop when mind goes into meditation. Therefore you have to give more stress on japa.

One thing more—however much we may practise, if we have an attachment with the world, then we will not be able to progress much. This very thing Sri Ramakrishna says, 'The boat that is tied to a tree on the bank, will not cross the river however

much we may row. The boat will remain where it is.' In the same way we have to cultivate the spirit of dispassion. For cultivating dispassion the first thing we need is discrimination. Through discrimination we see that there is nothing permanent in the world, everything is ephemeral. So we have to get that which is permanent. And God is the only permanent thing. When this thought takes root in the mind, then it is helpful for the practice of religion.

Three things are difficult to get in this world. These three are—human birth, desire to realize God, and an association with a great soul. Now we all are born as human beings, and also have the desire to realize God. Those who stay far away and are unable to associate with a great soul, or can not come in close contact with him, they also will get the association of the holy ones, if they read *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* with sincerity and steadfastness. While reading the conversation of Sri Ramakrishna on any day, they will have to meditate on it, and imagine themselves as if they are at Dakshineswar with Sri Ramakrishna and also listening to his words with rapt attention, in the group of other devotees. You have to imagine and think in this way. If you can do in this way then that itself becomes the association with the holy men. Raja Maharaj told us 'I am giving you the religious knowledge in one word'. Then he told us, 'Read the Gospel everyday. If you read the Gospel everyday your mind will be always and completely free from the troubles of the world, from the worldly attachment. Troubles and attachment etc. will go away gradually from the mind. Then there will be an intense desire to realize God'.

The Vedantins say, 'Who is the competent person for Vedanta?' The answer is those who are endowed with four-fold disciplines (*sādhana catuṣṭaya*). Who are

these people? They are those who discriminate between the real and the unreal, who discriminate between what is permanent and what is impermanent, those who renounce the desire to enjoy in this world and in the heaven, those who are desirous of attaining liberation; and those who are endowed with self-control etc. that is, practise the ethical qualities of a pure life. If one is endowed with all these then he is competent to study the scriptures. Without these disciplines one will not be able to understand the meaning of scriptural statements. They understand in the reverse way. Indra and Virochana went to their preceptor to study scriptures. The Guru instructed them but Virochana understood the Guru's words in one way, and Indra in some other way. Virochana thought that the meaning of Guru's instruction is that the body is Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. Thinking in this way he became a materialist. But Indra had a finer intellect, and a little discrimination. He thought how can this body be the Brahman? The body is not permanent. Thinking in this way he returned to his Guru to clarify his doubts. In this way, after repeated visits, his doubts were dispelled, and he attained the true knowledge of Brahman. In the same way if we do not have discrimination, if our mind is not prepared for the realization of God, then we shall not be able to understand the scriptures in the right way. In order to understand the scriptures rightly, mind should be able to grasp the subtle things. The mind should be pure and holy. For that purpose these four-fold disciplines are prescribed. Those who are endowed with these four-fold disciplines, their mind will be pure. If they receive proper instructions in the Vedanta, they will understand them rightly. If he, whose mind is prepared with these four-fold disciplines, is instructed by a Guru once—the great maxim 'Thou art that, O Sveta-

ketu', then immediately he will have the knowledge of Brahman illumined in him. Therefore we must inculcate the spirit of dispassion and renunciation. Religion cannot be practised without renunciation. Sri Ramakrishna said that renunciation is the only way. What is there in the Gita? Only words of renunciation, and nothing other than that.

Swami Shivananda said, 'Everyone quotes the words of Sri Ramakrishna and says, "He showed the harmony among all religions". Sri Ramakrishna wanted to know what happens if we practise spiritual disciplines of all religions. He had a little curiosity about it. But he did not practise these disciplines with a specific purpose of showing the harmony in all religions. In the life of Sri Ramakrishna renunciation is the main teaching. This kind of renunciation was never seen in any of the incarnations.' What we now observe in the world is the lack of this spirit of renunciation. Selfishness has filled up everything, everywhere—either at the national level or international level or social level or family level. Anywhere you go, this selfishness has become the main trait. We have to remember this specifically that the ideal of Sri Ramakrishna's life is renunciation. If we can hold on to this ideal of renunciation, then everything will be alright.

Many among us say that there is no time to practise spiritual disciplines in the world. I have already told how to utilize the time that we get in the world by doing japa and meditation. And I tell this again that those who think they don't get time in the world are not speaking the truth. They get time to do all other things in the world, but when it comes to spiritual practice they don't find time. This cannot be. All activities of the institutions go on smoothly, but when it comes to keep accounts, they don't get time. Accounts are not regularly maintained or closed.

The things that cannot be postponed, we have the tendency to postpone. To say that we do not get time is not proper.

If you sit on the sea-shore and want to take bath in the sea, you sometimes cannot get into the sea for the fear of waves. If you think 'I will have my bath only when all the waves are subsided', you will never have your bath. Ocean can never be without waves. If you get into the sea in the midst of one or two waves and take a dip, then only you can finish your bath, not otherwise. Same is the case in the world. Troubles are always there. If you can snatch time in and through those troubles, and repeat the name of God, then only will you be able to practise spiritual discipline. 'I shall repeat the name of God when I am free from all troubles'—with this attitude you won't be able to do anything. However adverse may be the circumstances, why should you not try?

One thing more. We do everything for the body. We take great care to keep the body healthy. We have balanced diet, vitamins, expert medical advice and all that. But what shall we do if we fall ill? The body will contract diseases, will become infirm, then we will not be able to do any work: no energy for any work, no more capacity for taking care of the worldly affairs. Now we are alert in everything. But we don't have any idea about our mind. We have to keep the mind also healthy. If we do not keep the mind healthy we have no escape. This understanding we do not have. We think that the present state of our mind is natural and healthy. But it is not true. In our present state, the mind is diseased. If things do not happen as we wish them, we feel bad. If someone speaks harshly to you, you feel bad for the whole day. If some unhappy incident occurs, your mind is affected. Mind is to be kept calm and steady. It will be unruffled in misery or

unhappy incident. Even in intense sorrow, it will not be unsteady, but will remain calm. This is the healthy state of mind. In order to get this state of mind, we need the practice of spiritual disciplines. Moreover, I also remind you that when we will depart from this life, when we leave this body, we will have to be reborn. At the time of rebirth, we will get the strong, healthy body but not the healthy mind.

We will be reborn with this mind. Why? I have left the gross body, but the subtle body continues and gets another gross body. One of the constituents of the subtle body is mind. Mind, intellect, ego these are also in the subtle body. When we have the same subtle body, the old mind is, and will be there in the new gross body also. Therefore this time in this birth, at the time of departing from this body, if my mind is not healthy but diseased, then I have to be reborn with the present diseased mind. And if at the time of death I leave the body with virtuous tendencies then I shall start from that point in the next birth. Sri Krishna explains this thing to Arjuna, 'You will be born again in a good family; wherever you have left the practice of spiritual disciplines, from that point you will start in the next birth.' This will continue till you attain the realization of God. Therefore, we should be careful about our mind. But we are doing just the opposite. We care more for the body, and not for the mind. When you want to be careful about your mind you have to practise japa, meditation and all this. And then only will the mind be healthy.

I shall tell one thing more. Holy Mother said: 'All say that they have learnt that they cannot do anything without the grace of God.' This is speaking something just like a parrot. When I went to Cherrapunji I saw a mayna bird there. It repeated the name of the God—'Ramakrishna, Ramakrishna....' But it also has a danger. If a

cat comes near it, then 'Ramakrishna' will run away. Then it will repeat its natural sound. Similarly we also say that we have left everything to Sri Ramakrishna, left everything to God. We have no power to do anything. This is deceiving oneself. Holy Mother said, 'Everybody says "grace, grace". What will the grace do? Grace returns without doing anything. Why? The person upon whom we shower the grace is not able to receive it; he cannot receive it. Therefore the grace returns.' So, we have to practise spiritual disciplines, otherwise we will not have the grace. In our spiritual path—complete surrender to the Lord is a part of spiritual discipline; we have to take refuge at the feet of the Lord. If we can do that, then it is alright. After this, we can have the vision of God through His grace. There is a verse in one of the Upanishads, which is interpreted in two ways. One meaning is,—'those upon whom the Atman showers grace, will have the realization of the Self.' The other meaning is—'One who loves the Atman, gets the Self.' Shankaracharya interprets in one way, and Ramanujacharya interprets in another way. Now, the fact is that one who is blessed by the Lord, will have the realization. Sri Ramakrishna also said, 'We cannot do anything without the grace of God.' It is also there in one of the devotional songs. 'O Mother, unless you let us know, how can we know You?' This is alright. But who is the Lord, how do we understand Him? We have not tried to practise spiritual disciplines to know all this. And still we say the Lord is the goal of our life—this will not do. We should practise spiritual disciplines according to our capacity and then be at His door. Then alone shall we have His vision, His grace.

There is a parable in the Bible. Some brides were waiting for the bridegroom with the lighted lamps. But some of them

fell asleep. When the bridegroom came then also some of them were sleeping. Everyone could not know about the arrival of the bridegroom. Similarly if we do not practise spiritual disciplines we will not have His grace. This we have to bear in mind. When we practise, we should fully utilize the power given to us by the Lord. When we do that we will have His grace, and also more power from Him. Moreover, we on our part should not neglect spiritual practices. Therefore, forget about the grace of God. What is wanted in the beginning is our own grace. If we practise spiritual disciplines sincerely, and force our demands on Him, then His grace will come, otherwise not. This fact is to be remembered by all spiritual aspirants.

A spiritual aspirant should never feel despondent. Despondency will not allow us to progress onward. Sri Krishna tells Arjuna about the Yoga-abhyasa (practise of Yoga) in the Gita. How is this practice (*abhyāsa*) to be done? Gita says: *yuktavyo yogo anirvinnacetasā* 'This yoga should be practised with perseverance, undisturbed by depression of heart'. This is very correct. If you are at it, then there will be *yogābhyāsa*. In this way only, can you progress onward. If you are despondent, if you think, 'I am not getting anything. What has happened to me? What shall be my fate etc.' then these negative thoughts will not help you at all. As Sri Ramakrishna said: 'What? I have repeated the name of God, I have taken refuge at His feet. Why should not I realize Him? I shall certainly have His vision'. You should have a positive attitude like this. Then only will you be successful.

Everyone is trying in his own way to realize God. Our spiritual practices depend only on us. This has to be remembered. If we practise spiritual disciplines at the



end of life, they will not help us much in realizing God. God has not given us a bond that, if, we repeat His name for hundred thousand times or meditate for so many hours, He will appear before us. It is not like that. He will come to us by His own sweet will. It is also not true that He may not be pleased even if we do not do all

these. Both are true. We should always remember this. We should never deceive ourselves in thinking that we have left everything to Him. 'Without His grace we shall not be able to do anything', we should not say like this. These thoughts must not have any place in our lives, in our religious lives.

## A NUCLEAR-FREE WORLD FOR THE SURVIVAL OF HUMANITY

SWAMI HIRANMAYANANDA

[Our readers are referred to the 'Editorial' of the *Prabuddha Bharata*, of July 1987 wherein we mentioned about the International Forum for 'Nuclear-free-World for the Survival of Humanity' which was held in Moscow in February this year. This Forum was a unique one in the history of both Russia and the world. The Forum was organized in different groups representing religion, culture, medicine, politics etc. Nearly 1,000 eminent persons from different countries representing different fields of activities attended the Forum. Swami Hiranmavananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission who was invited to attend this Forum, delivered extempore the inaugural speech at the religious group of the meeting. He has written down the speech on the basis of the original speech he delivered and kindly sent it to *Prabuddha Bharata*. We are glad to publish here the text of the speech —Ed. P B ]

*Venerable Chairman of the Conference, brothers and sisters,*

I have been asked to speak on the subject 'A Nuclear-free World for the survival of Humanity'. I speak on behalf of Hinduism. Hinduism, you may be aware, is the oldest religion in the world. There is a continuity in Hindu religion right from seven thousand B.C., although there have been changes from time to time. But when we speak of ourselves as Hindus, you should know that in ancient times this religion was not known as Hinduism. It was known as Aryan religion, Sanatana Dharma or Vedic religion. When Muslims conquered our country they started addressing us as Hindus and, afterwards,

we ourselves accepted that word as denoting our religion.

We have been asked to create a non-nuclear world. But that is impossible. When fire was first discovered, it was used as a power of promoting the welfare of humanity. But even in that age, it was found to have a great destructive quality. However, this destructive quality did not make us give up fire altogether. We had to take care to use it for the wellbeing of humanity. Similarly, nuclear power is a tremendous power, and it can be used as a vast amount of energy under the control of humanity, for the progress and development of human society and life. But it has also the terrible power of destruction which may obliterate human life completely.



So the question is, how to control this destructive nature of nuclear power, and use it for peaceful purposes so as to bring about a new social order and human relationship.

This cannot be done by politicians and diplomats, because they want to use this power for controlling other nations and other people. But the difficulty is that if America produces an atom bomb, the Soviet Union cannot sit quiet. If Pakistan produces atom bomb, India also will have to produce atom bomb in order to defend the integrity and solidarity of her national life. So it is not possible for a few politicians and diplomats to bring about the elimination of the destructive use of nuclear power.

In this august assembly we meet as religious people. It is we who can educate a vast number of the world population. If we teach the masses in all countries about the danger of nuclear weapons, this will produce a salutary effect on the politicians who cannot go against the will of the people at large. So, we are the people of religion, and we must undertake to help the whole of humanity by preventing its destruction. But the real difficulty is that religions themselves go on fighting amongst themselves. So they cannot form a common platform to fight the evil forces of politics and diplomacy. This is because religious people do not lead the life shown by their prophets. Once when Swami Vivekananda was addressing a gathering in America where the audiences were Christians, he asked them whether they were leading a truly christian life and pointed out that 'Jesus had said, "The birds have nests, the foxes have holes but the son of man has no place to lay down his head". Then Swami Vivekananda asked, "where is your Christianity in this society? Go back to Christ." Do not all religions preach goodness and morality? But are these

virtues followed by the adherents of those religions? Swami Vivekananda, our leader, wrote in a letter, "I hate this world, this dream, this horrible nightmare, with its churches and chicaneries, its books and blackguardisms, its fair faces and false hearts, its howling righteousness on the surface and utter hollowness beneath, and, above all, its sanctified shopkeeping". Are we, who belong to different religions, not doing 'sanctified shopkeeping'? So we shall have to give that up and live the life preached by the prophets of different religions, and lead an ideal life of purity and poverty. If we do this, then our words will be invincible and they will transform the hearts of the followers of all religions.

Sri Ramakrishna, the founder of our organization, has laid down the path for bringing together all the religions of the world. He was born in 1836, and recently we celebrated the 150th anniversary of that event. He did not preach only doctrines, dogmas and rituals. He practised in his life the teachings of different sects of Hinduism as well as those of Islam and Christianity, taking them up one after another. And he found that all religions led to the same goal. Not only he had this realization in his own life, but he also taught it to Swami Vivekananda, the propagator of his thoughts, and also to his other disciples. Religion is like a science whose truth depends on its verifiability: this is the message of Sri Ramakrishna. Arnold Toynbee, one of the greatest historians of this century, said that Sri Ramakrishna took up one after another all religions. He practised them, and realized the goal of every religion. At last he came to the conclusion that all religions lead to the same goal. This, Toynbee said, was something unique in the history of religion.

India has been living for millennia, and throughout her history she has been invaded

by the Greeks, Huns, Sakas, Pathans, Mughals and the British. But the eternal religion of India is still living on. The Hindu never tried to convert anybody. Hinduism, however, has the power of assimilation, and so this religion conquered its conquerers.

Our organization, the Ramakrishna Mission, was founded by Sri Ramakrishna, and had Swami Vivekananda as its leader. In this organization we never convert but we accept all religions. Followers of all religions join our organization as monks as well as lay devotees. They have not to give up their own religions, only they have to understand the message of Sri Ramakrishna as propounded and declared by the great Swami Vivekananda. If every religion follows this method of acceptance, then there will be no quarrel amongst the different religions.

In order to achieve this goal, we shall have to understand another great teaching of Sri Ramakrishna. He taught us that in every creature there is the dormant divinity and when we serve humanity we are not serving material things or mortal beings but the essential divinity in man. In this way, we come nearer to a sort of socialism. Marxism-Leninism depends on matter as the ultimate reality. But the socialism preached by Swami Vivekananda is based on the spirit as the ultimate constituent of the universe. It holds that service to

humanity is the way by which real socialism can be achieved. Swami Vivekananda did not believe in any kind of privilege, neither physical, nor intellectual, nor economic, nor spiritual. He said that nobody who believed that man was essentially divine, could expect any privilege. Even the spiritual men should serve the lowest of humanity seeing this divinity in him. Swami Vivekananda also said that there should be equitable distribution of the objects of enjoyment. This Marxism-Leninism also preaches, but its angle of view about the world, and about man, is different. Swami Vivekananda taught that it was not through class war, but through service to humanity, irrespective of social position, creed, or religion, that real classless society would come. Swami Vivekananda got this idea from his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, who had taught him that mere compassion cannot be a sufficiently strong motive. What is needed is the worship of man as God, and serving him as God. So we, the Ramakrishna Mission, are trying to preach this gospel of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda all over the world. We hope humanity will ultimately understand the futility of grabbing wealth and suppressing human beings in every field of life. Then will come the true socialism spoken of by Swami Vivekananda whose philosophy is based on the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.

Thank you.

The duty of every aristocracy is to dig its own grave, and the sooner it does so, the better. The more it delays, the more it will fester and the worse death it will die.

*Swami Vivekananda*

# HARDWAR KUMBHA MELA 1986

SWAMI NIRGUNANANDA

The Kumbha mela at Hardwar, 1986 is a proof of the intensity of the cultural and spiritual heritage of India. The same tradition is still going on uninterruptedly from ancient times. Lakhs and lakhs of people of different places, and saints and yogis of different sects, came and virtually flooded Hardwar, Kankhal, and its surrounding areas. They came from mountains, caves, cities, villages, from all over India, and even abroad, enduring all types of pains and troubles. Their only desire was to take a holy dip at Brahmakunda at this auspicious moment, a rare conjunction of stars, occurring after twelve years. A deep brotherly feeling, heartfelt love, and sympathy among the millions of pilgrims could be felt everywhere. The *Rig-Veda* (10.1912.2.4) says: 'Let your resolves be equal and your hearts be also equal.' One could feel it palpably during this Kumbha mela.

The Kumbha congregation of 1986 was one of the greatest so far recorded. From unofficial sources it is estimated that seventy lakhs of people including seven lakhs of sadhu-mahatmas came for bath in this kumbha.

## *Origin of Kumbha*

According to *Skanda Purana* and *Matsya Purana*, at the time of creation a certain great saint cursed the gods. As a result they became weak. In order to regain strength they went to Brahma, the primal creator, who asked them to drink nectar, churning it out of the sea. Accordingly, they started to churn the sea; but they took the help of demons as they themselves were weak. The churning rod was the Mandara mountain, and the rope was the

enormously big snake Vasuki. This ocean is called Kshiroda Sagara which was situated, according to the Hindu mythology, on the northern side of the Himalaya mountains. Finally thirteen precious objects came out of this churning, such as poison, Pushpak chariot, Airavata-elephant, Parijata-tree (the tree of ever-fresh flowers) Rambha, (the celestial woman), Kaustubha jewel, moon of second tithi, Kundal, Saranga bow, five God's daughter, the celebrated horse Uchchaishrava, Lakshmi (the goddess of wealth), and Viswakarma (the god of construction). When the fourteenth precious object, the golden Kumbha (vessel) of nectar in all its blissful-luminosity in the hands of a god Dhanwantari came out, gods and demons became mad with joy for having it. All of them had heard that one could be immortal by drinking nectar. In the meantime, with the instruction of Indra, king of gods, his son Jayanta, taking the nectar Kumbha, fled away. Sukracharya, the preceptor of the demons, having come to know of it, asked the demons to go to the east and capture the Kumbha. Accordingly, the demons pursued Jayanta. In the meantime the gods also reached there. A fight ensued for 12 days between the gods and demons. These twelve days are equal to twelve years for man. During this period for the safety of this Kumbha, it was kept in twelve places—eight places were in heaven, and four places were on the earth. According to the tradition these four places were Hardwar, Prayag, Nasik and Ujjayini—all situated in India. Drops of nectar were said to have fallen in these four places in India. At this time the preceptor of the gods, namely, Brihaspati, and Sun, Moon, and Saturn helped Jayanta for its defence.

According to *Vishnu Purana*; 'Moon protected the nectar from falling, Sun from melting, Brihaspati from the demons, and Saturn saved it from Jayanta himself who might have otherwise drunk it.' That is why whenever in any one of these four places, these four planets meet, (this is known as Kumbha Union), the holy festival of Kumbha is held there itself.

The Vedic origin of the Kumbha Mela is given in the following lines of the *Atharva-Veda* (4.34.7): 'I have installed four Kumbhas filled with thickened milk, etc. in four places in this world.'

According to Mythology it is said that when in every twelve years these four planets meet at an auspicious time, then it is called Kumbha Mela, a time of union and the assemblage of sadhus and mahatmas, and all lay people, for taking bath at this time. When Brihaspati stays in Kumbha-Zodiac and Sun enters Mesha-Zodiac, it produces Kumbha, the auspicious union.

Astrological explanations of Kumbha are also offered. When Brihaspati, the life-augmenting chief of all planets, enters Kumbha-Zodiac, and Sun enters Mesha-Zodiac, an atmosphere of new life and bliss is created in Hardwar. At the same time, the influence of life-terminating Mars and Saturn, ends there. This atmosphere of renewed life exerts influence quickly on the subtle minds of all creatures, and creates an impression of joy everywhere. That is why virtuous people and the monks take more baths, practise more japa-meditation, puja, yaga-yajna, scriptural study, and charity etc. during this period.

### *Kumbha—its glory and greatness*

Vishnu-Yaga thus describes its glory: 'Those who will take bath at this auspicious time being present at the place of Kumbha, will be freed from worldly bondage. Gods

bend down to such persons, as the poor bend down to rich men.' 'One Kumbha bath gives result equal to a thousand baths in Kartika-month, hundred baths in Magha-month, and one crore baths in Vaisakh-month in Narmada river.' (*Vishnu Purana*). 'It is also described that one bath in Kumbha-union gives the equally divine result of thousands of Ashwamedha, and hundreds of Vajapeya yajnas, and also the merit of going on pilgrimage a lakh times around the world.' (*Vishnu-Purana*).

### *The greatness of Gangadwara (Hardwar) and Brahmakunda*

In Hardwar, generally this holy bath takes place in Brahmakunda, a spot where Ganga enters the plains. The greatness of this place is described in the Hindu scriptures in various ways: 1. Countless drops of nectar had fallen in this Kunda. 2. (a) According to one opinion, Lord Narayana in the form of Ganga melted with the praise sung by Narada. Brahma poured that melted water of the Ganga into his own bowl and said to Ganga, 'You are tired, take rest and then go.' (b) According to *Tripura Rahasya* (22,45) 'At the time of Vamana-incarnation, the surface of the universe was pierced by the toe-nail of the uplifted foot of Vishnu. Through that cracked opening, Ganga, full of nectar, descended from that foot of Vishnu, and Brahma took her with him, pouring her into his bowl (Kamandalu)'. In either case it is said that at the call of Bhagiratha, Ganga first descended on the matted hair of Shiva, and then on to the Himalayas. Coming from there, the Ganga, after embracing the famous Brahmakunda, enters India. 3. In *Dwapara yuga*, Kurukshetra was the only Tirtha, and in Kali Yuga Ganga is the special Tirtha. Bath in the Ganga, puja, and living specially on the Ganga of Hardwar are particularly

considered more virtuous deeds. 4. Traditional belief is that Bhagavan Vishnu did tapasya, Brahma himself did yajna and tapasya, and Sri Ramachandra did Shraddha and tirtha, here. 5. Besides, at neighbouring places of this Kunda, the sacred Bhagavata was related by Shukadeva to Parikshit, by Dattatreya to Vidura, and by Sapta Rishi to Narada. Sapta Rishis did also practise austerities (tapasya) here. Near the Kunda, there are a few deities like Durga, Manasa, Chandī, Ganga-Mata, Pataleswar Shiva etc.

During the Kumbha, elaborate preparations for bath are taken. Readings from the Vedas, Sama-songs, recitation of hymns of gods and goddesses, songs and music create a vibrant spiritual atmosphere in the entire region of Hardwar, Kankhal and its surrounding areas.

During the Kumbha of 1986 also the same spiritual atmosphere was created. Devotional songs also had been broadcasted from a long distance through loud-speakers fitted on the lamp-posts on both sides of the Ganga.

The Mela Superintendent (adhikari) fixes the times for bath separately for pilgrims, monks, and ascetics. The arrangement helps the millions to see the bathing procession of sadhu-saints, and to take bath in the same water after the bath of all-renouncing monks. While going for and coming back after the bath, the devotees sing in congregation different bhajans, dancing with joy and devotion, and also songs, such as 'Govinda Jaya, Jaya; Gopala Jaya Jaya etc.' This time Bathing went on during the whole day and night.

Lakhs of sadhus and saints from all over the country rushed this time for bath to the Brahmakunda at Hardwar. Some of them came on foot visiting holy places on the way, some came by bus, or railway, and some came in procession with decorated elephants, horses, camels, and chariots.

Some took a few months of walking before arrival. Tradition has it that Kumbha bath is not effectual unless it starts with the bath of monks.

#### *Residence arrangements*

There are many Akhadas (monastery), Ashramas, Mission, and sacred places (Pitha Sthanas) here. Among the monasteries the chief ones are Niranjani, Nirvani, Juna, Ananda, Avahan, Pancha-Agni, Atal, Udasi, Vairagi, Nirmal, and the Ramakrishna Mission. They arrange for the bath-procession and also arrange special tents, camps, etc. for the stay of their own sadhu-saints. Akhadas or Ashramas, having no branch here, come earlier in order to make tents, camps etc. for their own accommodation. Vairagi Akhadas make camps at their allotted places separately. In every camp there are: one office, movable images of deities, small tents, stage for lectures, decorated gate with the pictures of gods and goddesses or saints or auspicious symbols, and also their own religious symbols. It would seem that a new township of camps has been created in the surrounding areas of Hardwar and Kankhal.

#### *Camp Entrance*

There is a ceremonial procedure for camp entrance. This entrance takes place with a colourful procession on a particular day accepted by both Mela Adhikari and Akhada Parishad. On that day at first two large flag-posts (Dharma-dhwaja) are inaugurated in the camp in the presence of invited sadhus and ascetics. Then a colourful procession is taken out from a particular place. After going round, it enters into the camp. In this procession there are decorated thrones with umbrellas carried on the back of decorated elephants,

horses and camels. Young boys and girls dressed as Hara Parvati, Lakshmi Narayana, Rama Sita, Radha Krishna, Ganga on crocodile, Mahavira, ride these thrones. Mahamandaleswaras and Mahants are placed on many of these thrones. Moreover, monks of every monastery (Akhada) or Ashrama join in this royal procession, accompanied with banners and flags. Some of them chant stotras, sing, and dance along with music. Being decorated with different red-ochre coloured dresses, long silver rods and big fans on their shoulders, they move on. It is indeed a multifarious congregation. This royal procession comes in front of every Akhada or camp. There one sadhu holds some coins over the head of the guest sadhu, in his honour. The leader of the band-party collects these coins, dancing all the while along with devotional songs. Besides, certain Akhadas or Ashramas convey their greetings by garlanding with marigold flowers. They also offer sugar-candy sharbat and aniseed to sadhus for their refreshment, and one sadhu garlands another out of mutual respect.

### *Spiritual Great Yajna*

Sadhus enter most of the camps before the day fixed for Shiva-worship. On this day they take a ceremonial bath. During the intervening periods, homa-sacrifices are performed in pomp and grandeur in all these Akhadas, Ashramas and camps. Day and night, through loud-speakers the Veda-recital, Sama-songs, devotional songs, and stotra chantings are blurted out. Discourses on the Upanishads, complete reading of the Gita, Ram-Charit Manasa and the Bhagavatam with commentary, Vishnu sahasranama, Shivamahimnastotra, Guru stotra, and Ganga stotra go on in different places. Rasalila or Ramlila, singing the praise of a deity, Arati-Bhajan, etc. also

continue in many places. Simultaneously, Hathayoga practices such as control of breath, Harijan Puja, and various difficult ascetic practices like placing on one's head coconut fire, practising Pancha tapa, ascetics standing on one leg, and lifting up one hand, etc. are also seen.

On invitation learned Mahamandaleswaras, Mahants, Acharyas or learned saints give lectures or talks reciprocally in Akhadas, Ashramas or camps. Images and pictures of Rama, Krishna, Mahavira, Vishnu, Shiva, preceptors, and tutelary deities are taken round. Besides, daily worship, fire-sacrifices, and the worship of ten Mahavidyas are also performed.

During the Kumbha of 1986, an image of Adi Shankaracharya was inaugurated. Moreover, a few monks were crowned as Mahamandaleswaras ceremonially in the presence of invited sadhu mahatmas. Some Brahmacharins were given Sannyasa by the authorities of the Akhadas. Such religious Convention (Sammelan) was introduced by Adi Shankaracharya among the Sannyasins and devotees.

### *Bhandara (Sadhu Seva and Feast)*

As a token of love and exchange of brotherhood feasts are offered to monks in many places. This is given by the Akhada or camp authority, alone or along with devotees. The feasts or Bhandaras are of two types, one where only a small number is invited (*vyashti*), and the other where a large number is invited (*samashsti*). In some places a few thousand sadhus are invited. A fixed time is given for Bhandara. Before that time sacramental cooked food (*bhoga*) is kept ready. All Mahamandaleswaras with their sevaks gradually arrive at the site and sit in a place from where lectures are delivered by a few Mahamandaleswaras and Acharya Mahatmas. The Mahant, the Kothari

(Manager), the Asanadhari (leader), and other Sadhus coming earlier take their seats and listen to the lectures. The authorities also direct them for taking their respective seats. When lectures are over, the Mahamandaleswaras are worshipped with camphor, chanting of stotras, putting chandan on foreheads, garlanding with marigold flowers, and other offerings. Then bugles are played, and '*Om namah parvati pataye Hara Hara Mahadeva*' is chanted by all the sadhu-mahatmas. At the same time, fifteenth chapter of Gita is chanted. Then all monks are worshipped with flower, chandan, and offerings (some-time including cloth or blanket) by the host sadhus. Two of them do puja, and two disburse offerings. Other two move with long silver rods on shoulder, and red turban on their heads. These last two sadhus are called kotwals or security officials. When the serving of food is completed, the authority gives signal for playing the bugle. On hearing it the invited sadhu-mahatmas chant again, '*Om namah Parvatipataye Hara Hara Mahadeva*', and start to take the prasad. Prasad is the same for all. It is generally made of wheat products, different types of sweets, rice with ghee, curd, porridge, vegetables etc. During the meal the monks chant shlokas from scriptures. At times devotees also sing devotional songs and chant religious verses. The authorities take care to see that food is properly served everywhere. Meal completed, the bugle is played once again and the guests also get up chanting '*Om namah Parvatipataye Hara Hara Mahadeva*'.

During this Kumbha, the Kankhal branch of the Ramakrishna Math and the Mission also came forward with an elaborate programme. Accordingly a camp for eleven days accommodating over 2,000 devotees and sadhus was opened, and along with it there was a regular spiritual pro-

gramme also for that period. Discourses were given by Mahamandaleswaras, Acharyas, Mahants and learned monks on the Advaita-Vedanta, the Upanishads, the Gita, the Ramacharit-Manasa, the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda. Besides, there was a daily arrangement for treatment of sick sadhu-sants and devotees in the Mission Hospital, and also through a Mobile Dispensary van in the Mela area during the celebration days.

#### *Auspicious bath*

The various monasteries and scholars after examining the scriptures and old traditions, ascertained the lunar days (tithis) for eight baths in holy Brahmakunda at Hardwar. Among these baths, the last one was most important. The first bath or the first shahi (royal procession) bath fell on Mahashivaratri, 9th March 1986 for the Dashanami (Ten named) sannyasins. The second Shahi bath was on Chaitra-Krishna-Amavasya on 9th April, 1986 for Sadhus of all schools. The third Shahi bath was on Chaitra Shukla Panchami—Mesha Sankranti—14 April 1986 (at Rohini star in Nectar Union—*amrita loga*), for all monks.

According to the traditional rule about the succession of the order of akhadas or monastic groups for baths at Hardwar Kumbha, the first to go are the Naga Sannyasins (or the naked monks of the north). Following these Naga Sannyasins, other Sadhus come for bath riding on decorated horses, camels and different types of chariots with thrones, umbrellas and flags. Some come on palanquins, chairs etc. drawn by cars and trollies. In this bath-procession the predominance of chariots is more, and the entire congregation looks like the field of chariots in Kurukshetra war. With each of the decorated chariots there are two decorated monks fanning



the sitting head monk, and two kotwals with long silver rods, turbans and red scarfs.

In all processions most of the Mahamandaleswaras and Mahants wear garland of marigold flowers, use ashes, and red sandal paste. Other monks are also decorated in various ways, including garland of marigold flowers. Many carry their own flags and banners. Some of them wear turbans and scarfs, and carry long silver rods or big fans on shoulders. Some carry auspicious pots with holy water on their heads. Some move on reciting the Vedas and Sama-songs. Some go on dancing, and singing bhajans with music. Besides, there are band-parties with loud-speakers.

Millions of virtuous people feel happy to have the holy darshana of this biggest congregation of monks in India. Some of the devotees serve them with cold drinking water, sharbat etc. Some devotees shower flowers, and again some of them become blessed touching the ground with forehead, and taking the dust of the road touched with the holy feet of sadhus. Some of them go to have darshana of their holy baths, and feel blessed after taking bath in that holy water. The monks also convey their blessings to the vast assembled crowd by raising their hands and throwing flowers on the crowd of devotees. Again and again the joyous shout, 'Bharat ka Santsamaj ki jai', rend the skies, bringing a rare thrill in the minds of millions assembled for the holy occasion.

## THE UNNUMBERED MILLIONS IN MALNUTRITION

DR KAMALA S JAYA RAO

Culturally and historically an ancient country, India is, population-wise, a very young country. Forty percent of the six hundred and odd million Indians are children under 15 years of age, and nearly half of them are under 5 years of age. This is a great human potential which, if developed and exploited properly, can carry on its shoulders the stupendous task of nation-building. Realizing this Swami Vivekananda said: 'My faith is in the younger generation, the modern generation, out of them will come my workers.'<sup>1</sup> His heart cried out, seeking a few hundred young men and women with vigour in the blood, strength

in the nerves, iron muscles and nerves of steel<sup>2</sup>. Very few filled that expectation. Even today, eight decades after his sojourn on earth and four decades of political independence, the motherland is unable to fulfil her offering to fulfil the dream of her glorious son.

Nearly forty percent of India's population lives below the poverty line, unable to obtain the basic necessities of life. There is widespread malnutrition in the country. A good yardstick to measure the extent of malnutrition, is the nutritional status of children under five years of age. More than eighty percent of the under-five children suffer from different degrees of malnutrition.

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) Vol 5, p. 223. (Hereafter referred to as *Complete Works*)

2. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol. 3, p 278



Until about two decades ago, nutritionists thought that Indian diets were low in protein. It is now established beyond doubt that it is not so. A simple rice and dal (pulses) or roti and dal diet, can provide enough protein if taken in necessary amounts. What the people, be it children or adults, are lacking in, is food energy. To put it simply, they need more food. It is bread that suffering millions of burning India cry out for with parched throats<sup>3</sup>. There is, therefore, no need to manufacture exotic protein foods, or to cultivate crops like soya bean which are alien to our soil. Give the children the simple food which they are used to—rice, wheat or any other cereal grain, with some dal, and if possible some milk, but in amounts needed to promote good growth and sustain good health, and a sizeable portion of the malnutrition problem will be solved. In the absence of adequate food energy, whatever protein is present in the diet will also be burnt away by the body, like the proverbial tribal woman who uses sandalwood as fuel for cooking<sup>4</sup>. Similarly, in the absence of adequate food, vitamins and 'tonics' will also be wasted. Use of proteins and vitamins in the absence of adequate food, will only serve to fill the pockets of multinational drug companies, and the coffers of the developed nations.

The country boasts, and rightly too, of its successful green revolution. We feel happy about our food reserves. Yet we have this paradox of 'the unnumbered millions whom we have allowed to starve in sight of plenty'<sup>5</sup>. The poor have no money to purchase food. In spite of the white revolution, or Operation Food, as

it is now called, a child in rural India hardly gets opportunity to taste milk, once it is off its mother's breast. Why was this situation of starvation amidst plenty allowed to develop? It is mostly due to misdirected economic policies, half hearted implementation of welfare and development programmes, and lack of political foresight and will. Swami Vivekananda asked his disciple, Sharat Chandra Chakravarti, 'A nation that cannot provide for its simple food and clothing, which always depends on others for its subsistence—what is there for it to vaunt about?'<sup>6</sup>. The principle of self-reliance and encouraging cottage industries is being given the go by. We neglect the admonition: 'Remember that the nation lives in the cottage'<sup>7</sup>. There is an undue fascination for importing sophisticated technology. Swamiji knew we are a nation of born slaves and chided, 'People of foreign countries are turning out such golden results . . . . . and you, like asses of burden, are only carrying their load. The result of such policies will be a further reduction in the purchasing power of the poor, and little likelihood of ameliorating malnutrition.

#### *Population growth and malnutrition:*

Many believe or are made to believe that people are malnourished because they have many children and large families to support. This is at the most, a partial truth. It is wishful thinking that only reduction in population will automatically solve our nutrition problems. A reduction in population growth is no doubt necessary, for man does not live by bread alone. There will be demand for more water, more living space and more air—commodities which cannot be expanded. However, it is

3. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol. 1, p. 20.

4. मलये मिल्लपुरन्धी चन्दनतरूकाष्ठं इन्धनं  
कुरुते ।

5. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol. 3, p. 431.

6. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol. 7, p. 145.

7. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol. 5, p. 29.

equally naive to believe that the maladies afflicting the nation can be solved merely by limiting the size of the families. The remarks that procreation is their only recreation or that they do not accept advice due to ignorance and superstitions, is very uncharitable towards our rural brothers and sisters. We need to understand the socio-economic and health factors operating in the rural areas.

#### *Consequences of malnutrition:*

Malnutrition is one of the biggest child killers. India has high infant mortality and a very high death rate for under-five children. About 40 percent of the total deaths in India are in the under-five age group, compared to a figure of 4 percent in the developed nations. The published rates are averages for the whole country, and therefore underestimate the rates for rural areas. With nearly 80 percent of the population living in the villages, the actual number of children dying before they celebrate their sixth birthday, would be staggering. This is a colossal waste of precious human resources.

Through experience, people have come to realize not to put much trust in a child's life till it is 8 or 10 years old. Therefore, a woman conceives repeatedly to ensure the survival of atleast three children. For socio-cultural reasons the family wants atleast one male child. The mother, undernourished and weak even to begin with, suffers further deterioration in health. Added to this is the poor availability and in many places non-availability, of good health services. The mother therefore cannot successfully carry through all her pregnancies. As mentioned earlier, those babies that are born may die in the first year of life, or during their toddler stage. It is estimated that an average Indian woman goes through about eight pregnancies, to be left ultimately with

3 or 4 living children. Moreover, in a family which lives on minimum subsistence, even a 10-12 year old child can add to the family income by going out to work. A slightly younger child will act as a surrogate-mother to his or her younger siblings, relieving the mother to go out to work.

Malnourished children are grossly underweight and short statured because one of the most important pre-requisites for growth, namely, food is lacking. The children are also listless, apathetic, show no interest in their surroundings and lack power of concentration. The last may be, inter alia, an important reason for the high school drop-out rates, in the villages. Swamiji therefore put food before education, 'Man is first to be saved, he must be given food, education and spirituality'<sup>8</sup>.

The functioning of almost all physiological systems in the body is adversely affected. The immune system, the defence against infectious diseases, also suffers. As a consequence, resistance to infectious diseases is poor in a malnourished child. The child suffers repeatedly from infections. Each attack of illness leads to further deterioration of the nutritional state. A disease which may pass off as a minor episode in a healthy, normal child, becomes a serious condition in a malnourished child. Superimposition of an infection on an already weak body sounds the death knell, and this is how a large number of young children die.

The two most common diseases are diarrhoea and infections of the respiratory tract. Organisms causing diarrhoea are waterborne and most villages in India do not have safe and potable water. Swamiji's statement that to the poor 'we have been giving ditch water to drink'<sup>9</sup> is literally true.

8. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol. 6, p. 451.

9. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol. 3, p. 431.

The only period when an Indian child leads a healthy and happy life, is during the first four to six months after its birth. A lean, listless mother carrying a chubby cheeked, bright eyed baby with a cherubic smile, is not an uncommon sight. This is made possible by the sacrifice the mother's body makes, by providing adequate amounts of milk to the baby. Mother's milk also has the property to resist infections. 'Of all feminine types in India, the mother is pre-eminent. The mother stands by her child through everything'<sup>10</sup>. But the mother's health suffers badly. The repeated burden of pregnancy, and nursing the child, made necessary by the high child mortality rate, in an undernourished woman, is one of the main reasons why, unlike in developed countries where women outnumber men, the reverse holds good in India.

For the reasons mentioned above, under-five children, pregnant women and nursing mothers are referred to in nutritional parlance as the vulnerable groups. This does not, however, mean that the older children and adult men are healthy and well-nourished. The undernourished child grows up into a short, underweight, young adult with weak muscles and poor vigour. 'Freedom is the only condition of growth, take that off, the result is degeneration'<sup>11</sup>, said Swami Vivekananda. A society which fails to provide the pre-requisites for free growth and development of its children, can only be saddled with such men and women. The reason for the apparent laziness of Indian villagers—an oft-heard and an undeserving remark—can be understood only against this background.

This was the dismal state of India which Swami Vivekananda saw during his

parivrajaka days. Nine decades later, the portrait is not very much different. The progress that independent India shows off, is confined to few select parts of urban India. But Swamiji warned, 'A few thousand graduates do not make a nation, a few rich men do not make a nation'<sup>12</sup>.

This situation can be improved only when we realize that whatever be the material progress we make, the human resources should be strengthened first. 'We want men, not money. It is man that makes everything, what can money do?',<sup>13</sup> wrote Swami Vivekananda to Swami Akhandananda. Computers and colour televisions cannot keep a dying nation alive. India has to recognize its true mission, and rededicate herself to it, 'each nation has a mission of its own . . . and so long as that nation keeps to that ideal, that nation nothing can kill, but if that nation gives up its mission in life and goes after something else, its life becomes short, and it vanishes'<sup>14</sup>. In his first public lecture in the East, Swami Vivekananda categorically stated: 'Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race, it never was, and mark my words, it never will be'<sup>15</sup>. What then is India's mission? 'The national ideals of India are RENUNCIATION and SERVICE. Intensity her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself'<sup>16</sup>. Sacrifices are necessary to uphold our mission, 'You nourish your body by eating. What good is there in doing that if you do not hold it as a sacrifice to the well-being of others?'<sup>17</sup> In a country where

10. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol 8, p 252.

11. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol 5, p 23.

12. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol. 8, p. 330.

13. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol 6, p 406.

14. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol. 2, p. 371.

15. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol. 3, p. 108.

16. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol 5, p 228

17. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol. 3, p. 446.

three-fourths of the population has neither money nor muscle to undertake this, the task has to be undertaken only by the privileged minority. 'Then only will India awake, when hundreds of large hearted men and women, giving up all desires of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost for the well-being of the millions of their countrymen who are gradually sinking lower and lower in the vortex of destitution and

ignorance', said Swamiji<sup>18</sup>. Such were the leaders who won for India its political freedom, and such need to be those who will win for the country its economic freedom. It is as much a necessity for the rich, as it is for the poor. For, no minority however rich and powerful, can hope to live forever at the expense of the impoverished masses—'No man is an island in itself, but a part of the main'.

18. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol. 5, p. 127

## A SACRED PLACE OF PILGRIMAGE

SWAMI DHIRESHANANDA

Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna Deva said, 'Know for certain that God is manifest in the place where many devotees perform austerities, japa, meditation and earnest prayers for years, with the noble intention to have the vision of the Lord. Divine thoughts get crystallized there, as it were, out of their devotion. Therefore it is quite natural that in these places the devotees easily become absorbed in meditation on God and enjoy His vision'

Countless devotees, saints and realized souls, from time immemorial, have visited these holy places intending to see God. They renounced all their worldly desires, and came to these holy places to pray with all earnestness to the Lord. As a result, God, though He exists equally at all places, is particularly manifest at these holy places of pilgrimage. (Dakshineswar Kali temple, for instance, is such a place, although there are numerous Kali temples in the country.)

Temples remind us of God and divine inspiration grows within. For those who have devotion already, visits to holy places increase that devotion in them. But those

who are unfortunately devoid of devotion, how much can they attain there? The place where the devotees discourse on Him is charged with divinity. The Lord's presence can be palpably felt there, and all the places of pilgrimage congregate, as it were, in such places.

Visiting holy places and service to the Lord constitute an important aspect of spiritual practice. This is a means to calm down the turbulent mind. In his life of Sri Chaitanya Deva, Murari Gupta writes, 'So long as the turbulent mind does not become tranquil and pure, the spiritual aspirant should go on visiting holy places. Just as a traveller takes shelter in a favourable place, similarly a spiritual aspirant after his mind becomes calm, being freed from all the impurities, will go to Puri Dham or to any such holy place, and spend his days in meditation and reflections on God.

In the beginning the aspirant goes to various places of pilgrimages, and later settles down at a place, and becomes engrossed in meditation. Bhagavan Sri

Ramakrishna Deva spoke about *bahudak* and *kutichak* monks. Some monks visit many places and drink water there. The Master referred to them as *bahudak*. And some after visiting many holy places, attain peace of mind, and build up a cottage and meditate there. They are referred to as a *kutichak*. The results of a pilgrimage can be directly felt. It is seen that many people struck by miseries, have attained peace after visiting holy places. In a place of pilgrimage seekers of truth assemble around the saints and sages in order to satisfy their queries, and there they worship the various gods and goddesses with devotion. Such a place must also be beautified with lakes and rivers. Monks assemble at such holy places; one can enjoy their holy company.

By their very nature monks do good to others. Even the blind walk along the right track on hearing from others. Seekers of Truth also find the clue to the right path on listening to the advices of the realized souls. A Saint shows the right path to God realization. The scriptures said, *uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata* that is, one must go and prostrate before the realized souls and with their guidance realize the Supreme Truth. The scriptures did not ask us only to 'know', but emphasized that we must 'realize', that is, listen attentively to the teacher, and stand on firm convictions about the Supreme Truth, beyond any doubt, with the help of systematic reasoning. Realization of Self is the only goal in a man's life. Because only Self-knowledge can totally uproot all worldly attachments.

A question may arise as to how to distinguish between the wise and the unwise. It is said that a son of unknown parentage does not bear any mark on his forehead, nor does the palm of a man of noble birth show a lotus mark, but the

words flowing out of their mouths disclose their family background. It is the same in case of the wise and the unwise. Words of a wise man give peace to the mind, his company gives joy, and God reflects in his heart without any special efforts. Even the simple desires of a wise man are free from all attachments. It is well known that the company of fools produces just the opposite results. A Hindi proverb goes, 'when a wise man seeking liberation from bondage meets others of his nature, he spends his time on discussions of spiritual matters only. But fools always quarrel among themselves and break up in broils after inflicting kicks and blows to one another.'

It is necessary to change our attitude to life. There is no need to wait for the dissolution of this world full of miseries. The good, bad, the ugly, and the outward love-hate relations will eternally continue in the same fashion in this world. But an aspirant for liberation should ignore them, and pay all attention to his inner self. If one wishes to travel to a remote place, he cannot physically move by a railway coach from one place to the other, but he has to reach his destination. Similarly, Vedanta teaches us to look inward, and turn away from the outward life. You may live in the family but don't belong to the family; never forget your real Self. Never wander around here and there, after knowing that the pleasures and miseries in this world are illusory. They do not exist in the real Self. We simply attribute them to ourselves by illusion. This is the teaching of Vedanta.

Human beings have three duties. Only three things are to be thought about in this fleeting phenomenal world—holy company, devotion to God and taking dip in the Ganga and other holy rivers. This is the first step to God-realization. And

these are the primary duties to be performed in a holy place.

There are two types of pilgrimages: the stationary and the moving. The saints and the realized souls represent moving pilgrim centres because they always hold in their hearts Lord Vishnu. Their presence invariably adds holiness even to the holy places. Company of such noble souls is greatly beneficial to the seekers of liberation from bondage. The stationary pilgrim centres such as Varanasi, Vrindaban etc emanate a spiritual wave at certain times of the day. This is felt by the devotees at a particular time of the day and night in a particular place, and this becomes very helpful to their meditation. Swami Brahmananda (Raja Maharaj) used to say, 'At Varanasi, the spiritual wave becomes more powerful from 3'0 clock in the morning. The same spiritual vibration blows around the same time at Belur Math and at Bhubaneswar Math. At Puri it blows in the evening. These hours are very helpful for meditation and japa. Even the departed souls live in subtle bodies at these holy places. This is known as faithfulness to the holy abode of God. During these auspicious hours even these departed souls also become helpful to the devotees in their meditation. Revered Raja Maharaj himself had this experience at the time of his performing austerities at Vrindaban, and recorded it. Similar visions and experiences he had at Varanasi.

What are the duties to be performed at a holy place? In this connection Sri Ramakrishna Deva said, 'Prostrations with devotion, japa, that is, repeating God's name, taking the water in which the feet of the venerable deity have been washed, chanting aloud various stotras, hymns, offering alms to the poor and the needy—these should be performed. While on a pilgrimage, a bound soul spends all his time in carrying and looking after the

small bundles of his wife. He remains busy in rolling his son on the temple courtyard and making him drink the water in which the feet of the venerable deity have been washed. As a result he does not find any time to sit quietly and meditate on God.' Sri M, the recorder of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishnu* used to perform a lot of japa and meditation. He used to show as much devotion to the *prasada* that is, remnant of the offerings to God, as to the Lord Himself. Being fully immersed in devotion, he would take a tiny part of the *prasada* after touching it to his forehead. He would go to the Howrah railway station and beg from the travellers returning from Puri, the *utke prasada* (the dried rice offered to the Lord Jagannath). He would take only a very little part of it with respect and devotion, lest he should be greedy for *prasada*. He used to say, 'a divine communion takes place between the devotee and the particular deity on seeing, touching and taking His *prasada*.' Therefore, one should take a very small quantity of *prasada* with utmost devotion and respect. In course of a conversation Holy Mother once said at Jayarambati, 'Oh yes, I know the measure of devotion of the devotees. They look upon the Master only in the photoframe, eat the delicious food offerings after nominally showing these to Him. Had the Master taken the offerings himself, I know who would offer how much! They fixed up compulsory contributions to meet the expenses during the Master's illness at Co sipore. One devotee fled away for fear of regular contribution.'

The Master used to say, water from the Ganga, dust from the holy land of Vrindaban, and Mahaprasada (*utke*) of the Lord Sri Jagannath Deva represent Brahman Itself. One can attain devotion in life on taking them regularly. What wonderful devotion the Master and his disciples had

towards the Ganga. Raja Maharaj would mention of five attributes of the Ganga water, before drinking it. It destroys all sins, it generates devotion to the *Ista*, it satisfies all desires, it bestows freedom, and it purifies the fallen and the down-trodden. At various times, during an eclipse, he would ask someone to dip his rosary in the Ganga.

The Master used to say, 'One should go on reminiscing after returning from a pilgrimage. As the cows fill up their stomachs slowly by eating straw, grass etc. and then go on chewing the cud, similarly a pilgrim should contemplate, meditate, and reflect on each spot in a holy place. That would render more lasting results. Whenever Sri M. would visit any place, he would observe most minutely each and every temple and all articles connected with it. The plants and creepers, even the dust from a holy place would appear to be illumined to him. With full mental absorption he would prostrate before the high and the low, even before the birds and the beasts, and embrace the plants and the creepers of a pilgrimage with love and affection. This is the right pilgrimage.

Those who visit holy places without the aforesaid attitude, that is, those who fail to observe the manifestation of God in everything in and around holy places, simply waste their time and energy. A pilgrimage does not imprint any long-lasting influence on them. Like the present day travellers they simply end up in moving around with camera, and being pushed and pulled by the crowd. They can only tell stories. There is a fine description about this kind of pilgrims in the *Shankara Digvijaya*:

'Here is a holy place, there is another; yet quite far away there is located another place. I have visited all of them, but you have not. The pilgrimage that you have undertaken would give you little results,

but the holy places I have visited would give me infinite results'—those who rush from one holy place to another with such an attitude, are unwise and suffer from illusion. They are not true pilgrims, as they do not possess the right attitude of a pilgrim. They can never enjoy the essence of a holy pilgrimage. A dip in an assemblage of all-renouncing saints and holy place destroys sins. But it is the monks in a holy place, that really makes the place holy. The devotees there learn dispassion and worship God. That makes a pilgrimage successful. Those who know this, know the truth of pilgrimage.

Extraordinary eagerness to visit many holy places is also harmful. That is a type of eccentricity. Sri Ramakrishna Deva said: 'If you can attain devotion right here, where is the need to go on a pilgrimage? I went to Varanasi and noticed the same trees, the same tamarind leaves. The mango trees, the tamarind trees, the bamboo bushes are the same there as they are here.'

Service to Guru and worshipping God comprise the main aspects of meditation. Acharya Shankara warned his disciple Padmapada when the latter wanted to go on pilgrimage: (*Shankara Digvijaya* (14.2). 'Living in the company of the Guru is, in truth, living in a holy place, and water in which the feet of the Guru have been washed represents the right holy place. To realize the inner Self with the help of the instructions received from the Guru and the vision of the same Self in everything and everywhere is the broad road to spiritual life. It is the duty of a disciple to serve his Guru and to live in his holy company and not to go away from him. Reflection on the Self is disturbed by the weariness and drowsiness due to much travelling. A traveller on a pilgrimage who remains continually busy and worried in search of food and drinking water, a right



trekking route, a comfortable resting place, becomes disturbed and does not find peace in his mind. Moreover, he feels absolutely helpless if he is attacked with fever and diarrhoea. The pilgrim then can neither move forward nor get any opportunities to stay back there. Even his fellow-pilgrims leave him behind. Early morning bath, worship, cleanliness etc. which are essential for meditation cannot be performed, neither can he get any help from his friends. The hungry traveller does not even get the bare minimum food.'

In this manner Acharya Shankara described specifically about the endless difficulties of pilgrimage and also clearly emphasized what is really meant by staying at a holy place. It is said that Padmapada ignored his Guru's warnings and went on pilgrimage. But he returned to his Guru after a long time, after experiencing a lot of sufferings, both physical and mental. On his return he expressed his regret, and asked for forgiveness from his Guru for his own ignorance.

So, after visiting some holy places, meditating on them, and practising spiritual disciplines with a steadfast mind, are the means to get the right sort of result of a pilgrimage.

Swami Madhavananda, an erudite scholar and an all-renouncing ascetic who recently entered into Mahasamadhi, once told a nice story at Hardwar:

'I was then spending my days in meditation, building a small cottage in a

lonely place in Mathura, and living on begging for my food. One day there was a heavy crowd at Vishram Ghat on the bank of the river Yamuna, on account of a special festival. An evening vesper (*aratrika*) service to Sri Sri Yamuna Devi, during this special festival, was going on there. It was very much attractive. Hundreds of men and women assembled at the narrow ghat. Everybody wanted to go near the river, and watch the *aratrika*. The usual pushing and pulling in the crowd was going on. I also wanted to see the *aratrika* and got trapped in the jostling crowd. An old villager saw my predicament. He suddenly came near me, and pulled me out of the crowd, saying, 'Please come this way, holy Sir'. He touched my feet and said: 'Maharaj, we are householders, we cannot meditate or worship. We have to face conflicts all the time in our homes. We have come here also to be pushed around. Holy Sir, you have renounced your home and family, and have become a monk. Why have you come here to be pushed by others? Please return to your cottage and engross yourself in meditation.' Madhavanandaji added further, 'Listening to the old man, I realized the truth of his remarks, and at once returned to my cottage and began meditation. At times how effective advices like this flow from the lips of ordinary men'. Do not these words uttered by an illiterate inmate of Vrindaban, and so beautifully narrated by Madhavanandaji, echo the sayings of the Master, Sri Sri Ramakrishna Deva?



# **“SATYAKAMA-SATYA-SAMPRADAYA”**

**‘Truth—The Aspiration and the Tradition’**

*(A Play in four scenes depicting some vital aspects of the Eternal Religion and Educational Culture of India.)*

**SWAMI SASTRANANDA**

## *Author's Note*

[The Play ‘Satyakama-Satya-sampradaya’ or ‘Truth—the Aspiration and the Tradition,’ is an attempt to present in an attractive form some of the abstruse but glorious and vital truths gifted to humanity by the ‘Upanishads’, the core-books of Vedantic philosophy—something which Swami Vivekananda would like to be done. The basic material of the play is from the celebrated chapters of a most ancient Upanishad, ‘The Chandogya’; only the interweaving interpretation and dramatization are the work of the author. Even that has been done in the framework of our ancient religious, and educational culture, and their life-giving ideals, which have been revealed to us by great luminaries, from Vedic Rishis to their modern counterparts, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. The ideas and ideals thus sought to be conveyed to, through this play are: truth and chastity, reverence for the teacher, mother and mother Nature, real education which is imparted only when the worthy teacher and the worthy disciple come together, faith in Truth, in the Guru and in oneself—and in and through all this the glory of the human soul, the Atman, whose real nature is Divine, essentially the same Divine which is the ground and goal of all creation.

The basic purpose of the play is to bring the deep truths of the Upanishads and their remarkable significance to a wider circle of people who are either not acquainted with them, or who have not got a chance to study them, and yet are prone to noble ideas and ideals, receptive to and enthusiastic about them, though apparently they may be untutored or ‘lay people’. However, it is not a ‘popular’ play, with a ‘mass-appeal’. In fact, it is a serious play, at times even ‘didactic’, with not much scope for action which conduces to ‘popularity’. Again, it is a play primarily meant to be ‘read’ and enacted in the mind of the reader. But it can also be successfully presented on stage, by intelligent and motivated groups, who are not too eager to entertain the audience, but keen to communicate the precious ideas and the theme.

For staging the play, the minimal equipment needed is very simple: Three curtains—(1) the front; (2) the middle and (3) the rear one. Curtains (2) and (3) may be of olive green and dark bottle shades. On the rear curtain, motif pieces—appropriate cut-outs, paintings or just outline sketches (bold, in golden colour) may be provided: an *Om* with radiating rays at the top centre, a lively reddish orange hued lively altar fire at bottom centre, one half of a large tree with spreading leafy branches extending to the centre of the stage at the extreme right and the front half, a white bull with large, intent, shining eyes at the extreme left. It would be preferable if the ‘bull’ piece can come in only at the appropriate time and context and then be withdrawn. Between curtains (2) and (3) an elevated platform (Stage II), may be provided some 35-40 cm. higher than Stage I. Organizers can also provide more elaborate and attractive settings, and stage-effects.

Those who are keen on staging the play may contact the author for more consultations. A Kannada version of the play also will be available for those who prefer that language.

A few words particularly to the reader of this play: The Vedic culture and wisdom, as coming down to us through the Vedas and Upanishads, is something which have been understood or appreciated by us, at best only very partially. Its real depth and dimension can be realized only by kindred spirits. It is salutary to remember that there are many dimensions of truth and life which are still unintelligible to us, which we should neither dismiss as childish fables, or misinterpret with our sullied minds and poor understanding. It is necessary to remember that in the world of Nature they lived, and with the qualities of intense and contemplative minds, they lived a life of reverent co-existence and communion with Nature—earth and sky, sun and moon, stars and fire, mountains and waters, plants and trees, birds and animals. Behind and beyond the apparent and visible world phenomena and its beings, they also seem to have sensed, felt, seen and communed with some corresponding and eventually transcending levels of Consciousness, which charged their life and words with meaning, purpose, strength, light and joy. Thus, in the play, when we see a Satyakama or Upakosala conversing with fire, bull or bird, it is not to be taken as a childish prattle or some outpourings of naive or unsettled minds which we may conveniently ignore. It is really a holy communion with the living, luminous, conscious, adorable Entity behind nature, the Divine, who deserves and demands our most reverent and receptive attention. Those who approach Vedic and Upanishadic lore with such an attitude will find it more than amply rewarding.]

#### THE CAST:

|                                         |                                                           |                                        |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <i>Haridrumata Gautama</i><br>(Acharya) | A celebrated Teacher and sage of Vedic times              | Age: About 70 years                    |
| <i>Satyakama Jabala</i><br>(Student)    | Haridrumata's disciple                                    | As Boy: 12 years<br>As Youth: 17 years |
| <i>Bhargava</i>                         | Satyakama's boyhood companion                             | Age: About 12 years                    |
| <i>Satyakama Jabala</i><br>(Acharya)    | Another celebrated Teacher and sage of Vedic times        | Age: 40-45 years                       |
| <i>Upakosala Kamalayana</i>             | Satyakama's disciple                                      | Age: About 20 years                    |
| <i>Samasraya</i>                        | : Assistant Teacher in the school (Gurukula) of Satyakama | Age: About 30 years                    |

#### SCENE I

[ Background Chant ]:

*Om Purnamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudacyate purnasya  
purnamadaya purnamevavasisyate Om Purnam... Purnam...  
Purnam*

[ Curtain I (front) parts revealing the outer precincts of Acharya Satyakama's Gurukula (residential Vedic school), a silent wooded area. Enter Upakosala with a cast-down countenance. ]

is 'full' and 'complete' except this one unfortunate Upakosala—except his sorrow-and-distress-laden heart... All is full! (lets out a deep, long sigh.... Ha..a..a Ha..a..a!) Even though he has taken complete shelter at the feet of the celebrated Acharya Satyakama, reputed to be a perfected sage

*Upakosala:* (Soliloquy—in a raised voice) Purna, Purna—Full! Full! Yes, All

and great teacher, yet incomplete, unfilled, remains this Upakosala.... Oh, hapless Upakosala!...

[Unknown to Upakosala, behind him has entered Samasrava, the assistant teacher at the Gurukula. He stands at a little distance away listening to his sighing words and then approaching him, speaks].

**Samasrava:** Upakosala! What is this? Why such words? Why, and how, are you unfortunate?

**Upakosala:** Of course unfortunate! What else? How many years have rolled by since I have entered this Gurukula! All the items of duties and service prescribed for the life of a brahmacharin have been faithfully discharged. All the required studies—even as the Acharya himself has directed have been duly completed. Service to the Guru, service to the Guru's wife, and service to the sacred fires—all have been carried out flawlessly. Yet... the grace of the Guru has not descended on this Upakosala. What else am I if not unfortunate?

**Samasrava:** Why do you speak in this strain, Upakosala? How agitated you are! I know myself how beloved a student you are of the Acharya—I know!

**Upakosala:** But it is not at all clear to me how I am such a beloved disciple! All the students who came and joined with me have completed their studies, been blessed with the 'Upadesha'—the final teaching, have received graduation and left for their own homes. Why only those who came with me? Even many more, who joined later on, also have graduated and gone back—fortunate souls! But... this Upakosala has stayed on here even as a pillar of stone, permanent and immovable! How many students—seniors, contemporaries and even juniors—have come and gone during

this long stay of mine here. It is difficult even to keep track of all their names!

What kind of special distinction has been bestowed on Upakosala! All of them came, they joined, they learnt, they completed the studies and left. But I, only I, just came here and joined—that is all. I am still learning—even now. (Excited) Is there never an end to this learning!

All the others became proficient, perfected and fulfilled—but I am left here eternally imperfect, unworthy and unfulfilled.... 'Unfortunate' indeed! No other word for it.

What should I say...? Whether it is my head that is just a lump of clay or whether it is the Guru's heart which is stony-hard..?

To the best of my knowledge, I have never shirked in my duties. All the work—whether it concerns the gurukula maintenance, or the service of the Guru, I have carried out with full faith and devotion. And as for the duty specially laid on me by the guru, viz., tending the sacred fires, that I have been discharging with special care. Still, with all this, I didn't know why he is so very indifferent to me!

Even Agni, the god of Fire has not been gracious unto me... How adverse my fate! What shall I say...except...that.. unfortunate indeed am I!

**Samasrava:** It does not befit you to be so much cast down, to be so much sorrowing, Upakosala! We all know how much faithful, devoted and dedicated to service you are. As to that, the revered wife of the Guru herself has interceded on your behalf and spoken to the Acharya... I know that.

**Upakosala:** (With a mixture of hurt pride, half-doubt and curiosity) Can you kindly make clear to me what exactly you know?

(To be continued)

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA:** BY SWAMI PRABHANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, 16 Ramakrishna Math Road, Mylapore, Madras 600 004. 1987. Pp. iv + 413. Rs. 23.

Here is a significant addition to the Ramakrishna literature. The book under review is the fruit of an accumulated labour of nearly one whole decade. From library to library, from door to door, the author Swami Prabhananda went, inspired by a rare passion, to collect heretofore unknown materials about how the compassion and the incarnation power of Ramakrishna came down on parching hearts, soothed, and transfigured men and women thirsting for God's love.

Magdalene and Paul reveal Christ as a saviour more than Matthew or Mark. The latter are the fortunate ones who came to the Lord early in life, while the former ones came after labyrinthine processes of karma and its consequential sufferings. They received the grace and love of the Lord at a time when they stood in total spiritual blindness. This book contains some touching accounts of these lost sheep for whom the Lord Himself comes again and again to this wilderness of life.

Manmohan Mitra, the rich educated young man was unearthing in the burial at dead night the just buried body of his seven month old daughter in order to get her back to life. The sceptic dramatist Girish was tormenting both in the inner and outer life for a Guru to lift him up from the morass of a debauch life. Shivanath, after being forced to reject his pure-souled first wife and marry again, was burning with a repentance and a wounded conscience. Yogindia Mohini, the rich young wife of a rich zamindar was out on the streets to be free from the unbearable tortures of her drunkard husband. Golap Sundari was burning in bereavement after the death of her only princess like young daughter. M. was out one night to put an end to his life beset with domestic problems too much intricate and unbearable for his sensitive soul.

To these lives who were crawling for survival amidst the dark night of the soul, Ramakrishna came with the tempestuous tide of God's love and God's grace transfiguring each by the irresistible power of a pure, and all-engulfing love.

Forty such lives have been portrayed, especially the moments of their first meetings

with Ramakrishna, the blessed moments of theophany—Revelation of God to man.

Some much less-known or virtually unknown facts unearthed by the author, brightens up the firmament of the Divine play of Sri Ramakrishna. We have read of Adhar Sen or Pratap Chandra Hazra. But how many of us know that Adhar was a brilliant scholar of the Presidency College who was awarded the rare Duff scholarship for English and who was already known as a poet, even before he met the Master? (p. 291). How many of us know that the cantankerous Hazra was blessed with the direct vision of Sri Ramakrishna before his death? His face was suddenly lit up and he said, 'Welcome! Most Welcome! Here comes Thakur! After such a long time Thakur has kindly remembered me!' (p. 122). How many of us know that one Mr Williams, a Christian from north-western India came to meet Sri Ramakrishna? This meeting broadened and deepened his ideas on Christ to such a degree, that in later years he used to salute the Siddheswari Kali of Thantania in Calcutta. Asked about this queer behaviour he used to answer, 'I saw Christ in the image. Obviously I do not hold my old views. Sri Ramakrishna crushed my prejudice and has given me a new vision, as it were.' (p. 169).

Heretofore unknown incidents and conversations have been added to the lives of those devotees of Ramakrishna of whom we have read in bare outlines in the already existing books. A storehouse of rare documents, personal reminiscences, exact dates and years regarding different incidents, this book reveals and illumines new dimensions in the life of the saviour-God Ramakrishna. Already many thinkers and authors are drawing heavily from the plethora of information gathered in these pages. Many more will have to do the same. Readers feel themselves nearer to Ramakrishna the saviour, the compassionate God of all, especially for common man and woman chained in the mire of worldly sufferings. The book obviously need to be translated in different languages so that common man and woman may feel more drawn towards their God—Ramakrishna, and adore Him with all their heart and life.

Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras deserves our gratitude for a timely publication of this book when thoughts on Ramakrishna are again on the surface of human consciousness during the master's 150th Birth Anniversary.

S.J.

'He who knows the Supreme attains the highest.'—Tait. Upa 11.1.1

Vol. II, No. 2

MADRAS, AUGUST 1897

Published Monthly

### LIFE OF SAINT VAYILAR

Religions have their seasons as well as years have, and as in the spring time when the whole vegetable world rejoices, flowers shoot forth, not merely from trees and plants but even from the shrubs on the way side and fences in the garden, so in the great Sivite revival of Southern India in the days of the last of the Pandyan, there arose saints in multitudes from every nook and corner of the Tamil land and not merely the high and cultured classes of the community, but even the lowest castes succeeded in bringing forth Bhaktas like Nanda, whose names a grateful posterity remembers with reverence and love Saint Vayilar, whose life is our present theme, was one of the children of this great revival, and though he was not of the lower castes, he was not of the first three. He belonged to an agricultural class, known as the Velala, and was born in Mylapore, the native place of this journal. His life was eventless, except for the one occupation which, though it might appear dull to some, engaged him both day and night. It was the worship of God.

His way of worshipping was, however, peculiar. He did not find much pleasure in going to the local temple, for, the worship there did not come up to his ideal; therefore he built a very grand temple of his own, the grandest perhaps ever known, with numberless towers, all of gold, high and spacious halls provided with walls of silver and pillars of gold and decorated with the costliest diamonds and rubies. The whole temple was built on a beautiful plan with five square walls, one after another, made of different metals, the outermost being of iron and the innermost of gold. It was lit up not with ordinary lamps but with big diamonds as bright as the sun and of the size of mangoes. Numberless mirrors disposed in an artistic fashion set forth the beauty of the temple in tenfold richness. In the centre of the temple was the *sanctum sanctorum* which rivalled the Kailas (abode of Siva) in grandeur, and contained a beautiful Lingam the image of God, adorned with the costliest jewels and the most fragrant flowers. On each side of the image stood a Kalpa tree whose flowers spread their divine fragrance all through the temple. It was a very grand temple, and my tongue does poor justice to its unrivalled beauty and splendour.

Here it may be asked, 'How did he afford the money for building so magnificent a temple, and where did he build it?' The answer is, he did not build it with money but with his lively imagination which, of course, cost him nothing except the rarest of things, viz. love to God and the splendid temple was all in his mind. He would constantly live with the God of that temple, make Puja to it day and night, and forget even meals and sleep in that occupation. He would seldom talk to anybody, for he was too busy, and he would go on making his Puja without caring whether it rained or thundered, whether it was night or day till he forgot even the temple and God, and himself alone remained. In course of time, the image also disappeared, and his own soul became God. Says his biographer: "His mind was his temple, wisdom the lamp that shone in it, bliss the water which he poured over his God and love the offering he made to that Deity." Tradition adds that the glory of his silent worship gradually became known to the world, and when he died he was canonised on earth, and in Heaven he became one with God.

Such is the glory of mental worship. Ah, how cheap is Heaven and yet how dear?

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पृष्ठ ५५०

मूल्य : १०.००

### स्वामी विवेकानन्दकृत योग पर विख्यात पुस्तकें

ज्ञानयोग

रु० ११.००

वेदान्त के गूढ़ तत्त्वों का सरल, स्पष्ट तथा सुन्दर रूप से विवेचन।

राजयोग (पातंजल योगसूत्र, सूत्रार्थ और व्याख्यासहित)

रु० ६.००

प्राणायाम-ध्यान-धारणा द्वारा समाधि-व्यवस्था की प्राप्ति के विषय में उपयोगी सूचनाएँ और मार्गप्रदर्शन।

कर्मयोग

रु० ६.००

'आत्मनो मोक्षार्थं जगद्धिताय च' इस आदर्श के अनुसार कर्म किस प्रकार किये जाएँ, जिससे वे परम शान्ति का निदान बने—इस रहस्य का विवरण।

भक्तियोग

रु० ४.००

भक्ति का सच्चा अर्थ, सच्चे भक्त का जीवन तथा भक्तिमार्ग पर अधिकाधिक अग्रसर होने के लिए आवश्यक गुण तथा साधनाएँ—इस विषय का अत्यन्त रोचक एवं मौलिक दर्शन।

प्रेमयोग

रु० ५.००

प्रत्येक मानव के हृदय में निहित महान् शक्ति प्रेम का जीवन के सर्वोच्च ध्येय अगत्प्रप्ति के लिए उपयोग किस प्रकार करें, इसका अत्यन्त भावपूर्ण विवेचन।

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—Swami Vivekananda



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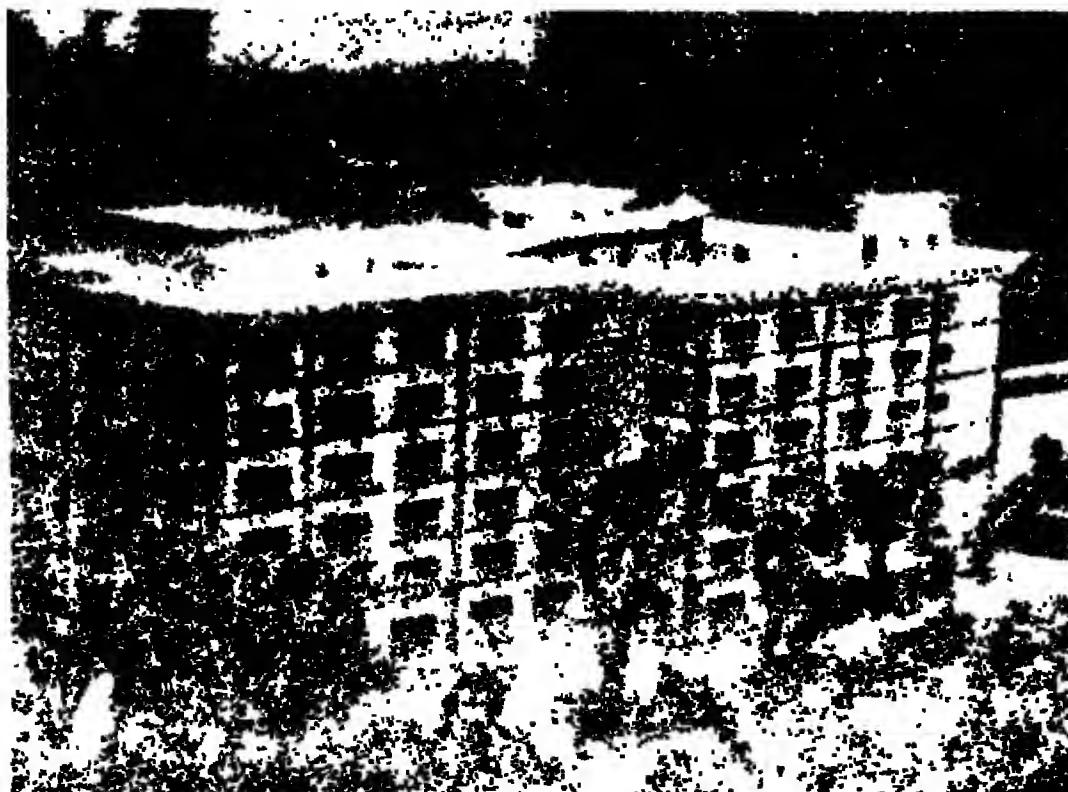
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